

Flying High



No. 4

LEWI KERR

Looking forward to a 'miracle' season

THE BIKE!

Secrets from the pit lane

EXCLUSIVE

Welcome to Eagles new appointment

Flying High Foreword

HG AEROSPACE EAGLES SPEEDWAY MAGAZINE

ISSUE 4 | FEBRUARY 2021

WE'VE CERTAINLY ALL had a cold blast from the East since the last Edition of *Flying High* but the mornings are certainly getting lighter, earlier and the afternoons are starting to draw out towards evenings ...a sure sign that Spring is on its way.

We cannot ignore or forget the fact that we are still in lockdown, but with infection and death rates falling and the vaccination programme racing ahead, the prospects for a Speedway season certainly look a lot brighter than they did a month ago.

The BSPL requested that all clubs prepare a League Fixture season commencing in May. We have done so and it's very important to place on record our thanks to a number of clubs with whom we've had dialogue with requests either to them, or from them, to amend the original fixture draft and there has certainly been fantastic co-operation all round.

I'd particularly like to thank Rob Grant at Newcastle who assisted in helping us to resolve a particularly late issue. We'll do our best to ensure that the team are fighting fit for their first away match on May 19 at Birmingham and the first home fixture on May 22 against Newcastle.

Unfortunately, the announcement that sporting venues WON'T be able to re-open until May 17, whilst great news in terms of the bigger picture, has scuppered our initial plans for early May, for now at least.

We had decided to try to get the lads some competitive track action by arranging a 2021 version of the famous Championship of Sussex for our opening Meeting on May 1. No amount of practice can replicate those hard and sometimes brutal first turns at this level, so better to get the team fully race fit before embarking on a season that holds a lot of promise and one we aim to deliver as much as possible.

We will have to wait and see what any crowd number restrictions are from May 17 but we will do our best to reorganise The Championship of Sussex meeting for later in the season.

Clearly "crowd restrictions and Covid-19 compliance" will remain in place until at least the end of June, and in reality probably for the whole of the 2021 season, so from MONDAY, March 1, we will be putting ON SALE a new tranche of 5 and 10 match ticket options and making match tickets available for ONLINE BOOKING for our first five fixtures against Newcastle (May 22), Poole (May 29), Kent (June 6), Edinburgh (June 12) and Leicester (June 27), so keep an eye on the club website and social media for details of ticket availability.

A reminder to everyone who purchased 2020 Season + 10 Match Tickets that you will have GUARANTEED access to matches in 2021 and we will explain fully how things will work for 2021 on Monday, March 1.

The will to win

It seems a long time ago now since we started 2019 with so much optimism and momentum and by and large we delivered and exceeded expectations of many on and off the track, in no small measure due to your fantastic loyalty and support.

The fact that the 2020 season was effectively lost has if anything enforced my passion to ensure that we achieve more both on and off the track and a lot of work is and will go on behind the scenes to ensure that.

On the track we have an excellent seven-man team. I would not swap any of them for anyone.

We have the seven we want and they will have our maximum support. We will set them up to succeed and support them all the way, in return, and particularly from these seven guys.

I think we will see a far greater intensity and will to win than maybe we saw on occasions in 2019, especially away from home, yet I believe we will have a lot of laughs and humour and great team spirit along the way. Trevor will get the most out of them as Team Manager and Promoter.

Sometimes on a Sunday

I'm pleased overall with the fixtures and we do have a number of Sunday home dates, that will always please some and not others. In all the surveys we've done it does seem Sundays are more popular especially with younger families.

There is though a very specific reason for some of the Sunday fixtures and that is to fully support the health and welfare of the riders in particular. There are four teams in the Championship who race on a Friday night and three of them are extreme distance trips.

I think we saw on a few occasions in 2019, that to arrive home at 3 or 4am on a Saturday morning after a 700-800 mile drive and then have to be back at Arlington at 5pm ready for a big match is far from an ideal scenario.

We've tried where possible to avoid that eventuality as we want a fit and fresh team whenever possible on their "A game", and hopefully everyone will appreciate those reasons and be able to come to as many matches as possible on both Saturdays and Sundays.

Strong addition

It's also very important that we have a team and structure off the track to match our ambitions on it, and you will see that we have made what I believe to be an outstanding acquisition for 2021. The full details are an EXCLUSIVE, later in this Edition. It is as important, if not more so, than any rider signing and I can't wait to get started off the track as well as on it.

Bjarne and Jason

Talking of signings, what an impact Plymouth have made within days of being approved to join The Championship, the signing of three-times World Champion and still the guy with the highest number of GP wins (23) in Jason Crump, still joint track record holder at Arlington and also former Eagle Bjarne Pedersen, who himself was a GP winner and who competed in 71 Grand Prix.

We will welcome them to Arlington on July 31. We particularly wanted to have them when we felt crowds would not be as restricted as they may be initially and it's a date for all of your diaries. I'm not as directly involved at Plymouth as I was on the Speedway side there now, focusing more on stadium events. There are some very exciting plans down there, but it's great to see and feel a similar buzz to what we had at the start of 2019 and judging from the number of riders



4



10



17



37

I've had ringing me from all parts of the globe to inquire about team spaces there, it's a message that's spread far and wide.

One thing though, that has convinced me that we are absolutely right here at Eastbourne is our "all-British" strategy, is the sheer amount and complexity of work permit, visa and other paperwork required for overseas riders in the Covid and post Brexit era.

I'm doing my best to avoid it at Plymouth, no matter how hard Mark (Phillips) tries to delegate it. It's not an issue we have to deal with and worry about in 2021 at Eastbourne and whilst you'd be unwise to say "never", I think the way to go is definitely "all British" and a philosophy of developing young and progressive British talent.

National Development League

As part of this strategy we have continued in our application to field a National Development League (NDL) team in 2021, provided that we have sufficient space and time in the calendar.

The league format is being developed, it looks like seven-man teams and a 35 point limit.

That is quite restrictive and definitely not as strong a league as it was in 2018, but I am sure that we could put together a strong and competitive and very entertaining team.

Draft team permutations include some outstanding young prospects who will become top class riders I'm sure, an out and out number 1 who is Championship Class and not currently in a CL Team and also some guys who I am 100% are, and will always be very popular at Arlington.

This together with our MSDL Team will give us a proper ladder of progression. With pre and post-match pits access being sadly prohibited by Covid-19 restrictions for the foreseeable future, we will also seek to introduce a "short old fashioned second half" to incorporate NDL and MSDL level junior races for those that wish to stay and watch the Stars of The Future, so there will be 3-4 added races, starting quickly after the main event to look forwards to.

Rising Stars

Finally, another big topic of conversation has been the announcement of "The Rising Star" Scheme.

A number of people have asked questions about it and how it works and a lot of people have seemingly made their mind up that it's either far too complicated and/or utterly confusing.

From my/our perspective at Eastbourne it certainly has some merit but equally there are a lot of questions still to be answered. It's definitely helped Tom to secure a fantastic opportunity at Belle Vue which is richly deserved and a great move for all concerned.

Tom knows that we will always put his interests first and always back him. He also knows that for as long as he wants a place at Eastbourne he has one, and that it's as much about us matching his ambitions as him matching ours. Equally, it allowed us to nominate Jason as our Rising Star No 7 for 2021 and that removed any doubt that we may have had to split our 2020 1-7 up.

That would frankly have happened over my dead body; and I'm relieved and mightily pleased that sanity has prevailed.

Tom, Jason and indeed Drew now have a clear career path and IF we wish to retain them, there are ways we can do that, as long as that is their wish too.

Career paths

It also gives a career path to Nathan Ablitt and in time Vinnie Joe Foord. What is currently of major concern to me, is that clubs like Eastbourne don't develop and nurture riders who can be then whisked away by clubs who don't give a jot about development, as part of a proposed draft scheme.

These issues though are concerns that we can and will raise and I am confident that they will be noted and listened to as the overall aims of the scheme are very laudable and positive.

As with anything, however, communication is key, if you try to work out all of the questions that any communication you issue may result in, and explain them in the communication before they are asked, it does help and avoids a lot of confusion.

I think in the case of Rising Stars, more needs to be explained about the qualifying criteria, who has assessed the riders in terms of their Star Rating, and fundamentally, a better definition between an Under 24 / 21 or whatever genuine Rising Star" and those riders who have been around longer and who are fundamental to the third tier, but who by no definition are in the same bracket as a Tom Brennan, Drew Kemp, Jason Edwards, Jordan Palin, Leon Flint etc.

It's not fair on some great entertainers and stalwarts on the NDL to not make that definition and hopefully the clarity and explanations will emerge. It is though, I think in terms of concept and opportunity, a credit to its creators and a quantum leap forward.

Ian Jordan

DIRECTOR

***The Management of Eastbourne HG Aerospace Eagles and The Eastbourne Seagulls powered by The Save Thurrock Hammers Campaign.**



CLICK TO JOIN OUR MAILING LIST



Contributors: Ken Burnett, Chris Geer, Tiffani Graveling, Keith and Yvonne Hall, Mike Hinves, Lauren Hinves, Phil Lanning, Taylor Lanning, John Ling, Kevin Ling, Pete Lulham, Mark Sexton, Jeff Scott, Alan South, Kate Patterson, Paul Watson, Ian Smalley.

Design by Barry Cross Artwork

Thanks to John Somerville - www.skidmarks1928.com

All content Copyright of Eastbourne Speedway Ltd 2021

EXCLUSIVE

Lee Kilby 'delighted' to be joining the Eagles



Les Aubrey



Lee Kilby celebrates Swindon Robins becoming Premiership champions in 2019 with his son Max, skipper Jason Doyle and the rest of the Robins team. Lee will be hoping for similar successes with the HG Aerospace Eagles in 2021.

“ I know more about Speedway than anything else on the planet! ...I am proud to be working for a club with such great history and one that is forward thinking. ”

Les Aubrey

LEE KILBY IS JOINING the Eastbourne HG Aerospace Eagles management team on a season-long loan from Swindon.

He will take responsibility for commercial and community activities as well as having oversight of match day arrangements.

Eastbourne Speedway director Ian Jordan said Lee would be a great addition to the team during the year Swindon cannot run while their stadium is rebuilt.

Lee is the son of Bob Kilby who was a legend for the Swindon Robins and scored more than 4,000 points for the Wiltshire club.

Lee told *Flying High* that speedway is in his blood and was hugely looking forward to getting started with Eastbourne.

When it became known Swindon would not run in 2021, Lee said in an article in the *Speedway Star* that he hoped to find a way of staying involved in the sport this year.

His comments attracted interest from a number of clubs but after speaking to Ian Jordan he realised Eastbourne was where he wanted to come.

"I thought this is fantastic, it will work for everybody. The main focus initially is to help Ian out with the commercial work and get out and about and spread the word on the Eagles. There are loads of opportunities at Eastbourne. There are so many initiatives in place. It's like having loads of coaches ready to go but they just need a driver to take it to the destination and make it a good thing. I am super excited about the opportunity.

"I know more about Speedway than anything else on the planet and if I cannot sell Speedway, I can't sell anything. I can't wait to get going. I am proud to be working for a club with such great history and one that is forward thinking."

Lee became commercial manager of Swindon at the end of 2016, a position he still holds. He added to his involvement with the Robins by becoming co-promoter at the start of 2019 when Colin Pratt left the role for Peterborough.

He joined Birmingham as full-time commercial manager in 2018 and continued in the role during 2019 on a part-time consultancy basis.

During this time he has also helped individual riders including Bradley Wilson-Dean, who was such a stand-out star in the Eagles first year in the National League in 2015, and Zach Wajtknecht.

Lee was also excited to start work with Eastbourne's all-British team who, he said, connected well with supporters.

"You sense that from the moment you step into Arlington and from a commercial and promoting perspective that's all you can ask for.

"It builds so many bridges. Once you can hook a kid and it's someone they can look up to, the kid is hooked. You retain that youngster and he or she brings mum and dad with them," Lee said.

"Eastbourne already have a base and there are great opportunities to bring people into the club. It's the best night out and we've had great success at Swindon in bringing in new businesses. I am excited about a club which has as much history as Eastbourne has and it is only going to progress and become a bigger club," Lee said.

Lee has an outgoing personality with a way of working which is all about meeting and greeting people and finding out what the fans are thinking.

He said: "The key to the commercial success is listening to people."

He promised to give his all to the Eagles in 2021 but wanted to assure

Robins' fans: "Swindon is my club and that is where my heart is. I want them to come back in 2022, of course I do, but for this year I am going to be 100 per cent Eastbourne.

"I am looking to bring some new initiatives to the club and doing everything I can to help the progress and have a good year."

Ian Jordan commented: "I think it's always important to clarify as clearly as possible any questions before they are asked in any communication and, therefore, it's very important for us to tell everyone not only how delighted we are by this appointment, but to stress that we sincerely hope that the Swindon Robins are back on track in 2022 with Lee and Alun back there at the helm.

"This move is massively to the benefit of the Eastbourne HG Aerospace Eagles and is seen purely in the context of the 2021 season. I would liken the scenario to that of a soccer context with Eastbourne as an ambitious Championship Speedway Club acquiring the services of Lee "on loan for a season" as being the equivalent of an EFL soccer Club acquiring the services of Pep Guardiola on loan for a season. ➤



Lee at the Celebration of Speedway event at Paradise Wildlife Park in February 2020.

“Lee brings Premier league Speedway winning skills and expertise on and off the track and we can all learn so much from him; and it can only be to the benefit of everyone at Arlington.

“The role that Lee had at Blunston dovetails perfectly for us as in Trevor Geer we have an outstanding servant of the Eagles as team manager and co-promoter in very much the role Alun Rossiter has at Swindon, and Lee’s skills very much cover the business side of the operation and allow us to bring in a consummate highly skilled professional, to help us, guide us and offer a valuable mentor service to everyone at Eastbourne; who may be keen to learn from Lee’s skills and experience.



Lee gets an early taste of speedway action on the terraces with his late father Bob Kilby.

“In business, which is my background, you very quickly learn that you cannot ever have enough top quality people.

“I passionately believe in our team on the track, and whilst we have some outstanding talent off the track, this was simply too good an opportunity to miss.

“In a number of long conversations with Lee, the synergy between our hopes and aspirations at Eastbourne to be the very best we can be, and Lee’s proven track record and keenness to work in the environment of gradual progression and pushing the boundaries that we see as part of our evolution, just fit so perfectly.

“Lee will have a completely free role, working in tandem with the outstanding Ian Smalley, our Creative Media and PR

Bob Kilby’s great day at Arlington

FOR MOST OF Bob Kilby’s illustrious career, Swindon and Eastbourne were in different divisions. As a result, he only rode at Arlington a handful of times.

Records appear to show that his first visit was in the June 1974, riding for the Oxford Rebels in a four team tournament against Eastbourne, Hackney and a team comprising ex-Eastbourne riders.

Bob scored seven points from four rides including one win.

Interestingly and with a link to Lee’s upcoming relationship with the Eagles, Trevor Geer racing for Eastbourne beat Bob in one heat as Trevor too scored seven points.

Hackney won the meeting: Hackney 32, Oxford 27, Eastbourne 17, ex-Eagles 16. Oxford’s ambition was hampered somewhat when a certain Gordon Kennett crashed in his first heat and took no further part in the meeting.

Bob’s first official fixtures against Eastbourne were at the end of his career in 1979. The first of which was at the Abbey and saw Swindon victorious by 48-30 on June 23 when he scored an untroubled 12- point maximum.

One week later, the Robins visited Arlington and again prevailed victorious by 47-31 with Bob scoring nine points from four rides.



This Mike Kilby photograph, part of the John Somerville Collection, is from the Robins v Eagles KO Cup meeting from at the Abbey stadium in May 1980. Mike was Bob’s brother and Swindon track photographer for many years. It shows heat two which ended: Bob Kilby, Kai Niemi, Eric Dugard, Malcolm Holloway (ef). Swindon won 62-46 on the night and 117.5 - 98.5 on aggregate in an 18- heat format. Bob scored 10 points from five rides at the Abbey stadium and a superb 15 points from six rides at Arlington as he showed his liking for the tight, technical track. The big story of the tie though was the performance of Gordon Kennett and Kai Niemi at Swindon. Gordon scored a faultless 21 point maximum for the Eagles and Kai backed him up with 19 points. Amazing.! Gordon and Kai scored all but six of Eastbourne’s point - an unreal performance.

Director, and our excellent Press and Media Team, to take our off-track business on to a whole new level.

“During this period we hope to build and grow our commercial function and for Lee to work with Ken Burnett on the outstanding work started by David Rollison in 2019 on the community side, where we have some exciting plans in the post Covid future.

“When I took over the running of the Speedway side of the operation in 2019 and was subsequently joined by Les Fineing as Director, we set upon a five-year plan to firstly stabilise the Club, secondly to grow and improve it on and off the track and thirdly to turn it in to a successful business; capable of winning silverware on the track and being profitable and successful and seen as visionary off the track, in that regard Lee will be a very important part of the jigsaw.

“We can never forget that everything we do is in recognition of the great traditions of the Club; it drives my thinking and passion for the Club, built by Charlie and Bob Dugard over many decades and still fantastically supported by The Dugard family.

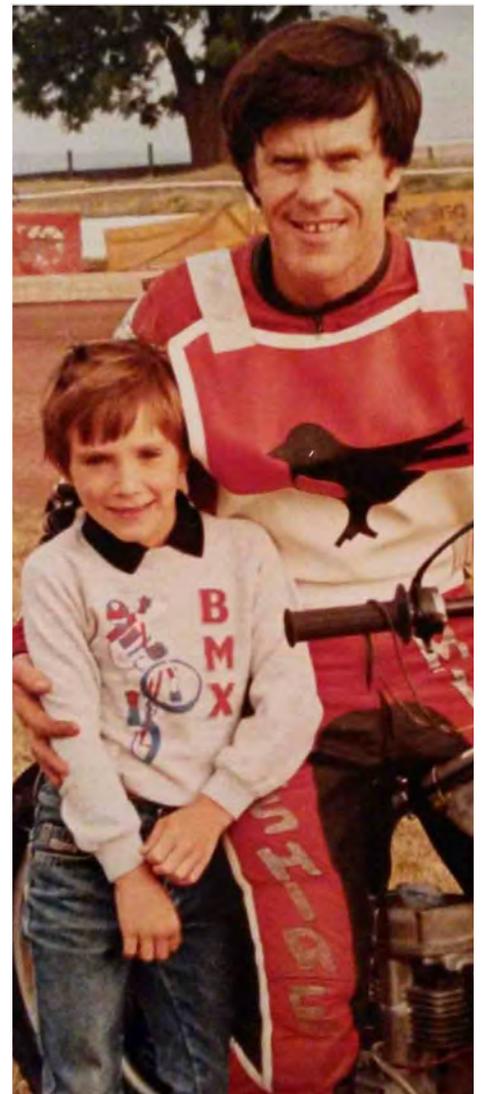
“The fact that we now have on board a growing number of top quality people only serves to show how great their immense contribution was in the past and



Lee in his role as Commercial manager at Swindon visits Southfields Primary school in 2018 to explain everything about Speedway to over 200 children.

how completely focused we are; in our custodian role of that proud tradition; to secure and build it for future generations.

“I know I can't wait to start working with Lee and learning from him; and I couldn't be more excited about the season ahead, both on and off the track.” 🌟



Lee with one of his speedway heroes Phil Crump in 1984. One of the talking points of the 2021 season is the return to track of Phil's son, three-time world champion Jason Crump after retiring in 2012. Jason has signed for Championship club Plymouth and his appearance for the Gladiators at Arlington will be eagerly anticipated.



Mike Hinves

Lee is excited to be working with Eastbourne's all-British team with youngsters including Tom Brennan. Lee is more than familiar with Tom's talent as he made a guest appearance for the Robins in 2018.

THANKS TO THE HG AEROSPACE EAGLES RACE SUIT SPONSORS 2021

EDWARD KENNETT



SPONSORED BY
**TRIANGLE
FIRE SYSTEMS**

LEWI KERR



SPONSORED BY
**KEVIN & DEAN
TOOKEY**

RICHARD LAWSON



SPONSORED BY
**SOUTH EAST
METAL SERVICES LTD**

KYLE NEWMAN



SPONSORED BY
**WAYNE
CLARKE**

TOM BRENNAN



SPONSORED BY
**JC
REFRIGERATION**

DREW KEMP



SPONSORED BY
**THE PARRY
FAMILY**

JASON EDWARDS



SPONSORED BY
**M SHUTTLEWOOD
LTD**

ELITEDISCOS
PROFESSIONAL DISCOTHEQUE

Mobile Disco
Eastbourne / Sussex

www.elitediscos.net

David Graveling
Property Maintenance

07976652813 / 01424 428311
www.davegraveling.co.uk



SAY YOU'RE MY NUMBER ONE!



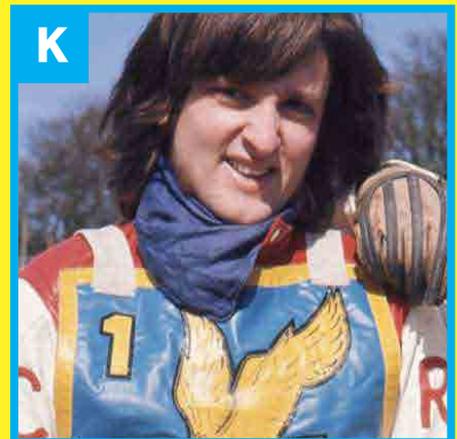
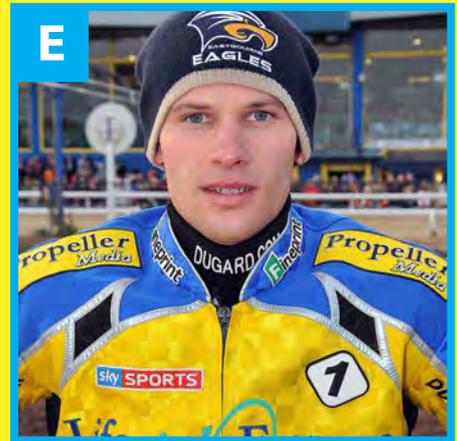
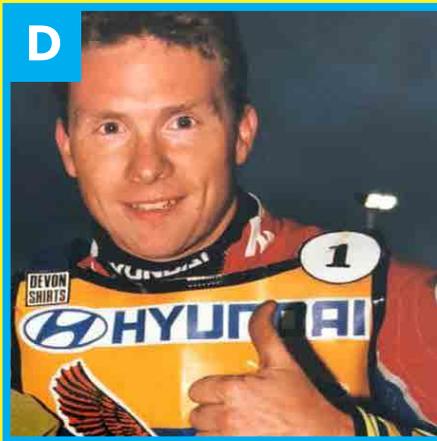
THE No 1 SPOT in the team is much coveted and goes (these days) to the rider with the highest average.

Here's a poser for you. Here are some photographs of some Eastbourne favourites in the No 1 racejacket.

Do you know who they are? And, do you know who is the odd one out?

It's just for fun.

The answers are on Page 45



Pictures by Mike Hinves, Tiffani Craveling, Mike Patrick, Eddie Garvey, The John Somerville Collection

Lewi looks forward to his 'miracle' season



Taylor Lanning

King's Lynn is very much home from home for Lewi Kerr but he soon found a happy 'second home' when he joined the Eagles for the 2019 Championship campaign.

He's on the cusp of a testimonial as Phil Lanning discovered in this exclusive story.

LEWI KERR GRADUALLY opens his eyes. From pitch black darkness, he gradually manages to focus on a blurry object in front of him.

It's his wife Jessie. They both burst into floods of tears.

After a terrifying handful of days, it's the first sign that Kerr was going to live after being put in an induced coma having sustained a bleed on the brain following a horror crash in the Fours at Peterborough on August 2, 2015.

Fast forward a shade under three years and it's disaster *deja vu*. Kerr ploughs into the fence at King's Lynn with a resulting broken leg and foot.

Yet here we are just over two years later and Kerr's

infectious Stonehenge smile and laugh is back as he approaches a testimonial year which he refers to as a "miracle".

Kerr, 30, looks like a hybrid of David Beckham and Bruce Willis. Not much hair, fit as a butcher's dog with an a la Becks accent and body art. Not so much Die Hard, but refuse to die.

As we sit in his house, I ask to see his battle scars from speedway. He reveals: "That's the stupid thing, I don't have any scars from speedway whatsoever. I have a mark on my knee from a motocross crash, that's all.

"I've obviously had two biggies in speedway and almost died, but not a thing to show for it. The lucky thing is that I don't remember much about the head injury.

"I know a little bit more now. Some bits are coming back to me from the morning of the meeting when I turned up at Peterborough. I actually remember parking next to my mechanic big Steve (Steve Norman). But that's it.

"Usually though from a brain injury you do get some side effects and I don't have a single thing wrong with me from the after-effects of the crash.

"To be honest, if I could remember anything from the crash it's debatable whether I'd still be racing. It sounded hell for Jessie and my family.

"I'm not sure exactly the first time I came round. I was still in the coma so I don't have any recollection of actually doing this consciously, if that makes sense. But Jessie was pregnant with our first baby Cooper at the time and I remember touching her belly.

"Because they asked me what is his name and I actually said Cooper. Jessie always says she knew I was normal from that moment. Mainly because nobody knew what we were going to call him at the time.

"At that stage the docs were just looking for signs of life and that there was no brain damage because I was still in the coma. They kept trying to bring me round and to see if I could breathe on my own.

"Jessie's dad had been quite high up in the Met Police so he'd seen lots of similar situations. When he saw me at the hospital he pulled her aside and said he wasn't going to feed her bulls***. He told her that people don't come out of here normal.

"He was just preparing her for the worst, give her the harsh reality that this could be a really horrible situation.

"I vividly remember Jessie saying that I'd had a crash. When I came round and out of the coma for the first time she burst into tears and I was very emotional too.

"The trouble was I was in

Addenbrooke's [hospital in Cambridge] for ten days and for the last couple of days I was kicking off because I wanted to go home.

"I felt completely fine in hospital, other than a bit slow and I couldn't read properly, I felt 100 per cent and was so happy to get out.

"But that was the worst thing ever in the end. When I got home I just felt completely lost. Where we were living at the time we had to move out because I couldn't remember living there and we'd been there previously for three years.

"That's when the crash hit me really, that's when it dawned on me just the extent of what I had been through.

"In the hospital I then had to have a lot of physiotherapy. They sent me down to the gents hairdressers and asked how much a haircut was. But for me to physically go in and do that was nearly impossible.

"I can't tell you why, whether I couldn't speak properly or just for my brain to work out any social skills. I couldn't walk properly yet I hadn't broken a single bone.

"My brain wasn't telling my body what to do so I was having to learn the simple things again like I was a kid, it was so bizarre.

"I was sent into another shop in the hospital and told to read the headline on The Sun and it took me ages just to complete a simple task like that. Not many people know what I've been through and how far I've come."

Kerr is then the miracle man returning to the sport with two solid seasons before joining King's Lynn and Glasgow and raking in massive points before another heartbreaking crash at the Adrian Flux Arena.

The x-rays revealed a broken left tibia, spiral fracture and broke four metatarsals in his right foot - and 16 weeks in a wheelchair to come.

He adds: "This time I was on the track screaming at King's Lynn. I remember everything about this crash, hitting the airframe legs first. At the time I was swearing in my head saying 'not again, give me a break'."



Mike Hinves

"I've never had pain like that before. It happened so fast, I jumped off the bike because I knew I was going into the fence. "I was absolutely devastated. My best season so far and for that to happen, I knew instantly both of my legs were gone and that's my season over.

"I'll be honest there were some dark days because it was sickening to lie there helpless on my sofa at home having put in all the effort for the season and how well it was going to see it end like that again.

"It was the second time I'd had a big crash and both of them hadn't been my fault. I was gutted. It was tough when I got home because we had the heatwave, Jessie was pregnant and Cooper is a toddler and you need to watch him 24/7.



"I just couldn't do anything but lie on the sofa. It was probably harder to Jessie looking after me and herself as I was trying to get my head around what had happened."

Now admits that he is eager for a new season to start and is focused on his future "miracle" testimonial.

I'm really lucky that I race for two brilliant clubs that I love. I've been confirmed in Eastbourne's team for this season but obviously with so much change at King's Lynn I've got to wait a bit longer for any team news.

Kerr laughs when it seems incredible that he has survived to celebrate 10 years on track at King's Lynn in 2021.

He said: "I think it probably is a miracle. We've certainly had a few scary moments along the way but it's a special thing to achieve.

"Of course I need to do one meeting in 2021 for King's Lynn for me to gain a testimonial I believe. I would imagine that we'll probably for March 2022 for an actual testimonial meeting.

"I'm really lucky that I race for two brilliant clubs that I love. I've been confirmed in Eastbourne's team for this season but obviously with so much change at King's Lynn, I've got to wait a bit longer for any team news.

"I'm gutted that Robert Lambert and Erik Riss won't be returning. But I completely understand why they have made those decisions. They are brilliant to race with in a team so obviously it's disappointing personally.

"There's no doubt that both of them are going to be hugely successful in the sport. I hope I get the opportunity to ride with them again."

Kerr was one of the lucky ones to get four meetings in the UK's constricted 2020 campaign but was certainly impressive when he was on track.

He added: "Strangely enough I had a really good 2020 with the four meetings I did. I really enjoyed the Belle Vue track and put in some of my best performances.

"I went into all the meetings with no pressure, just to earn some money and enjoy myself. In the end I beat some decent guys and had good speed.

"Now I want to take that sort of form into 2021. I remain very positive about the season ahead. I know things are tough now but I'm hopeful that we can get on track in May and beyond.

"I continue to work for one of my sponsors doing decking and all sorts. I will continue that job even when speedway returns.

"My bikes are gleaming and ready to go and I keep my targets that I want to have another solid season in both leagues and hopefully make my mark for Great Britain again." 🐦



☎ 0845 0920368

Corporate-Connection
Workwear & Business Clothing Limited
Professional Image Makers

☎ 0845 0920368

One Solution for all your corporate uniform needs.



📦 Competitive Pricing

🕒 Next Day Delivery

🔄 In-house Embroidery

💻 Online Ordering

Official Merchandise Partner of the Eastbourne Fineprint Eagles

EXCLUSIVE DISCOUNTS for Eastbourne Fineprint Eagles supporters. Quote **Eagles19** with any enquiry or order for your own Corporate / Work / Club needs

www.corporate-connection.co.uk

M Shuttlewood Ltd

COMPLETE SOLUTIONS FOR THE PUBLIC SECTOR

M Shuttlewood Ltd are proud to be an established family run business with 22 years' experience offering national coverage, and has been consistently awarded a full three year term asbestos licence from the HSE.

Established in the public sector and recognised and trusted within the local community, our primary business objective is to serve the construction and related industries through its enabling services.

Our motivation and commitment to health and safety is fundamental in everything we do.

All of our removals and construction are conducted in accordance with the statutory requirements under The Control of Asbestos Regulations 2012 and current HSE guidance.

OUR SERVICES

- ✓ Asbestos removal
- ✓ Reinstatement
- ✓ Demolition,
- ✓ Hazardous waste collections service,
- ✓ CCTV drain surveys
- ✓ High pressure jetting
- ✓ Groundworks
- ✓ General building maintenance

GET IN TOUCH

Freephone: **0800 111 4634** Office: **01268 692299**
enquiries@mshuttlewood.co.uk or
visit our website www.mshuttlewood.co.uk



Checkatrade.com



**HG AEROSPACE
ENGINEERING LTD**

HG Aerospace LTD are an aerospace manufacturing component company.
We manufacture and supply components for both military and commercial aerospace companies.

 (+44) 1424 853 444
  <https://hgaerospaceltd.com>

 **Proud Community Partners with The Eastbourne Fineprint Eagles** 

www.eastbourne-speedway.com/community



ROBINS
of Herstmonceux

Top Soil, Waste Transfer, Crusher Hire, Roadways, Aggregates, Coal & Garden Supplies

 **01323 833181**
 enquiries@robinsofherstmonceux.co.uk

**Proud long-term sponsors of Edward Kennett
and the Eastbourne Fineprint Eagles**

<https://robinsofherstmonceux.co.uk>




OH WOW!

THAT MOMENT

TALK ABOUT A TIGHT first corner ...spectacular action from the first turn at Arlington during an Eastbourne v Ipswich match in the Elite League. It is certainly a case of no quarter asked and no quarter given.

The visiting rider in yellow certainly has the drop but the other three all want same piece of shale.

Thanks to Pete Lulham, we reckon this action is from April 2010 and is heat one with the riders as follows (from left) Chris Holder (guest), Scott Nicholls, Simon Gustafsson and Claus Vissing.

Nicholls took the chequered flag from Holder with Gustafsson third with early leader at the back. The match ended 45-45.



THERE'S TIGHT, AND THEN THERE'S THIS!

signwizard

Eastbourne & East Sussex'
leading sign Manufacturer,
Designer and Installer.

www.sign-wizard.co.uk
01323 371686



SPEEDWAY
Chat Show

www.facebook.com/SpeedwayChatShow

Turner Engineering

 Remanufacturer of Land Rover engines,
supplier of new engine parts

 Engines

 Cylinder Heads

 Parts

 +44 (0) 1342 834713

 www.turnerengineering.co.uk

V8engines.eu



01323 763212



Hailsham Rd, Stone Cross, East Sussex BN24 5BU



BEN MORLEY

You cannot mistake this guy with his cheeky grin who is always up for a bit of fun.

Ben Morley, formerly of this parish, who in 2021 is down to ride for Kent in the Championship.

Ben was the first Eastbourne heat winner in The Championship when he sped from the tapes in heat one of the Championship Shield match against Birmingham on April 6, 2019. Ben was shepherded home by skipper Edward Kennett to give the Eagles a perfect start to the new era.

We are able to bring you this Then and Now feature thanks to incident recorder, Pete Lulham.

He has a collection of photographs shot over a number of years of up-and-coming riders taking their early speedway rides on the Arlington mini-track.

Mike Hinves was the man with the camera for the modern-day shots.



Obituaries



FORMER Eagle Dennis Gray died aged 91 at the end of January.

He was 91 years and living in a rest home at Swanage, Dorset. Among the teams Dennis rode for in the 1940s and 50s were Eastbourne (1946/47), Wimbledon, Oxford and Rayleigh. After retiring from speedway, Dennis became a copper miner in Africa, returned to England to work for London Transport before moving to New Zealand.

He eventually moved back to England and worked at the Wytech Farm oilfields in Dorset. He lived in retirement at Swanage.

The Eastbourne Speedway management send their sincere condolences to all Dennis' family. RIP Dennis Gray.

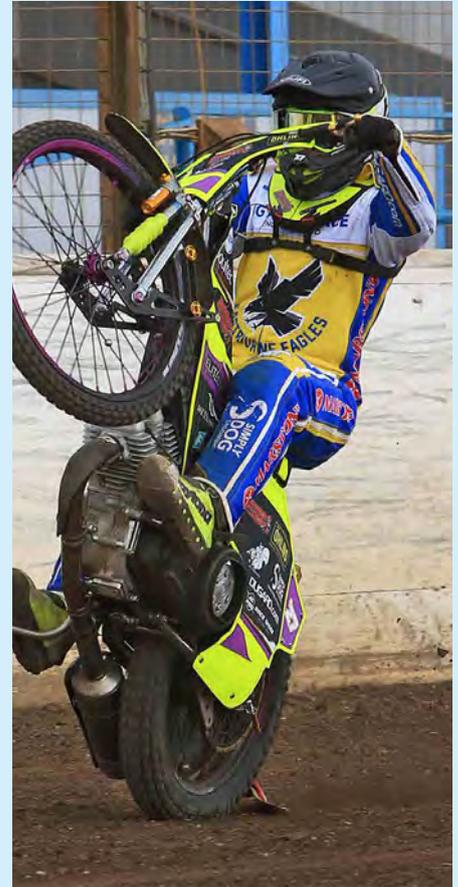


AT THE beginning of January, Ken Middleditch, died. He initially made his name when riding for Charlie Dugard when the Sussex speedway operation moved to the Pilot Field at Hastings in 1948 and 1949.

When Hastings closed, Ken moved to Wimborne Road, Poole.

His son Neil rode for the Eagles for three seasons (1973-75).

Everyone at Eastbourne Speedway send condolences to Neil and all members of the Middleditch family. RIP Ken Middleditch.



Mike Hirves

Drew and Tom are Rising Stars

BRITISH Speedway has launched a Rising Stars scheme to promote and develop the nation's next generation of riders. And there was good news (but not surprising) that both Tom Brennan and Drew Kemp have Rising Star places with Premiership teams.

Drew, who lives in Suffolk and is an Ipswich asset, will join his local club, the Witches. Tom has been selected by the legendary Belle Vue Aces.

Congratulations to both.

Lewis is a Star

LEWIS Bridger has announced his return to Speedway racing and will ride for the King's Lynn Stars in the Premiership.

And already, the Sussex-based racer is getting help from the captain of the Norfolk side, Lewi Kerr, who rides for Eastbourne in the Championship.

Lewis has received a huge financial boost from his grandfather and has bought two bikes from Craig Cook, the local newsbrand in West Norfolk, the Lynn News, reported. Lewis spent much of his career with the Eagles.



Mike Hirves

STAFF CARD

NUMBER 4:

Kate Patterson



Sam Hagon, Tom Brennan, Ben Morley and Kyle Newman with this month's Staff Card feature subject Kate Patterson, in the background.

We turn the spotlight on volunteers who play a big part behind the scenes in making sure everything is all right on the night. This month, Kate Patterson.

What do you do on a Speedway night?

As a member of the Community Team, aka The Yellow Hoodie Brigade, I arrive at the track at about 5.30pm to be briefed by Ian Jordan on my duties for the evening.

My main job is to conduct stadium tours for invited local community groups, such as the Scouts, football teams and other youth groups.

The stadium tours start at about 6pm with a group welcome and safety briefing outside the track before moving inside the stadium.

We then visit the pits area to watch the riders and their mechanics getting ready for the meeting.

Next, we embark on a walk of the stock car track stopping to hear our resident bike expert, David Rollison, give the low-down on the uniqueness of speedway bikes.

Then, it's over to either me, Josh or Paul to give the group some interesting anecdotes as well as a nostalgic insight into the history of this wonderful sport.

We then continue our lap of the track, pointing out the importance of the air fences, where the referees sit, how the gates work and the significance of the flags and lights systems.

Many people who come on our tours have never seen speedway before, so it's good to let them know what to expect from a meeting.

Quite often though we get people, especially parents and grandparents, telling us that they used come to speedway years ago and it's really great to hear them reminisce, share stories and name favourite riders from the past.

We also like to give people a bit of a review of the Eagles' season to date and the form of the visiting teams.

The people who come on our tours are very interested and enjoy asking questions which we do our best to answer.

By the end of the 30-minute tour, we feel we've given our guests enough information to whet their appetites for the ensuing meeting.

We end our tours by giving out badges to the children and inviting them to sign up for our Eaglets Club.



Kate Patterson

Pretty much as soon as the track tours are completed, I then need to get ready for my second main duty of the night, welcoming the Eaglet Mascots.

I meet the children and their families at the pre-arranged assembly point by the pit gate. We go over what will happen when they join the home riders for the parade and give out the Eagles' vests that they wear.

This is fun, as for the most part the children are buzzing with excitement and can't wait to find out which rider they are matched with.

Occasionally, we have a few who are a little overcast with nervous butterflies but we soon put them at ease when we introduce them to their riders who are always so friendly and gracious of their time.

Soon after, we hear 'Sussex by the Sea', the traditional music for the start of the parade strike up, and we're off onto the track and lining up with the riders and their bikes.

The mascots all enjoy hearing Kevin Coombes announce their names to the crowd and very quickly all that is left to do is to stand back on the centre green and watch the riders take a lap of the track before the start of the meeting.

It is then that I need to check that everyone is returned safely back to the outside of the track, ready to watch the first heat.

After that I'm free to go and watch the meeting with my own family, remembering that I need to meet up again with the Mascots and their families at the end of heat 13 to escort them onto the centre green to watch heat 14 and sometimes heat 15.

For me, standing on the centre green is definitely one of the highlights of the night. In the middle you get a completely different view of the racing. At first, I used to get quite dizzy trying to keep up with the bikes circling around the track, but I'm happy to say that I've now got more than used to it.

A special memory from the 2019 season was watching Richard Lawson and Lewis Kerr clinch the match in the thrilling final heat when riding against Sheffield.

After the meeting is over, my final job of the night is to accompany the Mascots, their families and our community groups back onto the centre green one last time for photographs with our riders and to sit on a bike.

Win or lose, our riders are always very generous with their time, signing autographs and chatting with the youngsters way after the meetings have finished.

This is a great way to end the evening as you hear first-hand just how much people have enjoyed the night. You see young and old going home happy after a great night's entertainment, with many vowing to come back.

It's great fun volunteering as part of the Community Team and I can't wait for the 2021 season to start. We are always looking for new members, so if you think you might like to join our Yellow Hoodie Brigade, do let us know as we are a friendly bunch.

How did you become involved?

I became involved after responding to a request made by Ian Jordan. He was asking for volunteers to join a new initiative called the Community Team.

I put my name forward and after a quick chat on the phone with Ian, I soon found myself meeting my new team mates, David, Josh and Paul at the beginning of the 2019 season. Straight away, we all got on like a house on fire and were soon working out our strategy for running the guided tours. We played to our strengths, with me taking on the resident historian of speedway and mascot co-chaperone.

How long have you been involved?

I've been involved with the Community Team since its creation in 2019. In our first season, we welcomed some pretty big groups - one night we had 120 people.

When numbers are this high we split into smaller groups, staggering the tours. The 2019 season saw the Community Team involved in distributing Easter eggs to children at our opening meeting and then helping to run the Eaglet Disco for our youngest supporters.



In the summer we also helped the riders to collect donations for the Speedway Riders' Benevolent Fund. That September our team lead, David Rollison, organised the spectacular Sykes Harley Davidson pre-match parade.

When did you start watching speedway and where?

My parents started taking me to see the Wimbledon Dons at the Plough Lane stadium in the 1970s when I was four years old. We used to go every Thursday night.

I was a bit scared of the noise but I also absolutely loved the thrill of it. We usually sat on the terraces at turn three but sometimes we were lucky enough to watch in style from the grandstand. This was because my Auntie Glad worked in the finance department at the stadium.

Sometimes, she would be able to get us free tickets and she would throw them out of her office window just above the turnstiles and we'd have to try to catch them!

With the meetings running to a second half, I was always amazed at how I got away with staying up so late on a school night.

Living in Worcester Park, we were rarely home before 10.30pm. But I guess it was down to my parents' enthusiasm for the sport.

My mum knitted me a red and yellow outfit to wear, complete with bobble hat and scarf. I remember we use to stop for chips on the way home which were wrapped in newspaper - imagine that now!

After a 30-year break from following speedway, I started going again in 2015 when we were looking for something to do one sunny, Sunday afternoon.

My Dad suggested we take the kids to Arlington to experience the thrill of watching four riders on four bikes doing four laps at break-neck speed with no brakes!

We made the hour and a quarter journey down to the track and it soon became obvious that we'd be back for more. My parents loved the nostalgia of it and my kids just loved it full-stop.

We went to every match thereafter that season and haven't missed one since.

What was speedway's attraction?

The sound of bikes revving in the pits and at the gates, the rhythmic sounds of the engines as they tackle the straights and the turns.

The smell of methanol, the klaxons, the shale flying up, racing under floodlights.

The bravery and commitment of the riders racing flat-out for their teams, the team riding, the changing places, the last split-second steals, the celebratory laps.

The fact that it's fierce, furious and fast - and live.

Who is your favourite Eagle?

They are all brilliant, it's so hard to choose. From my first season of supporting the Eagles in 2015, I'd say Marc Owen. He had a very smooth, neat style and made a great Team Captain, always looking out for everyone. From the 2019 campaign, I will say Lewi Kerr because of his consistency and commitment, a rider who doesn't falter when under intense pressure. But like I say, all the Eagles are great. 🦅



Kate with her favourite Eagle of 2019, Lewi Kerr

SUBSCRIBE, SAVE
MONEY AND GET
Speedway Star
DELIVERED DIRECTLY
TO YOUR DOOR...

...OR DIGITAL DEVICE
Speedway Star

is also available in digital format.
Guaranteed to be delivered to
your desktop or app. first thing Thursday.
For digital version please visit:
www.exacteditions.com/speedwaystar



you subscribe to the print version of **Speedway Star** and have not received your weekly copy following Friday's postal deliveries we can now offer you the opportunity to access the digital magazine for one week **free** of charge.

Simply **e-mail** your name, postcode and, if you know it, your reference number to: ssdigital@pinegen.co.uk and a link will be sent back to you as soon as possible. This new email account at Pinegen will be monitored seven days a week to ensure a swift reply to your request.

A replacement print copy can be sent. **Please state this in your e-mail** if required, although these will most likely not be despatched from our Surbiton office until Monday morning and can still face delays with Royal Mail.

www.speedwaystar.net



Let's aim for one big league

THE OLD CHESTNUT of 'one big league' has again raised its head this winter. The Premiership dropping to just six teams has given the idea new impetus.

Six teams in the top league with Play Offs for the top four is a strange concept and looking at team strengths, you have to say the gap between the Championship and Premiership is wafer thin.

The top flight has been badly hit by the change of rules in Poland, which places restrictions on team members ability to ride in multiple leagues.

Add to that the on-going effect of the pandemic, and you have a cupboard that is pretty bare for top-flight UK Speedway.

All those clubs can do is make the most of what they have got and get on with it.

Fair play to the six-shooters of the Premiership for doing what they can but anyone can see that 12 clubs in the Championship looks much more healthy.

But here's the rub: there's an awful lot of doubling up/down – call it what you will – and most teams in the Championship have riders who turn out in the Premiership.

There are simply not enough riders to go around.

That's been the case for some years, although people across the whole spectrum of the sport have been reluctant to openly discuss the issue and find solutions.

From a rider's point of view, only a handful of matches in the top flight makes it hardly worthwhile to invest in all the equipment needed. Doubling up/down probably doubles the opportunities to ride and earn money.

One big league of 18 clubs (20 when Swindon and Somerset



Edward Kennett

Mike Hinves



Tom Brennan

Mike Hinves

come back) would provide a full calendar of racing for fans and riders, so that surely has to be the aim.

We have to accept we cannot get to one big league overnight but clubs need to stoke up the training schools, leagues such as the MSDL and run second teams, where they can, to bring on a host of new riders.

An influx of new riders, pushing for places, means Britain will find new stars.

The other aim should be to cut costs: every effort to reduce a rider's expenditure on bikes seems to fall flat.

There are vested interests out there and they need to be tackled head-on.

Speedway should look at other forms of motor sport.

It costs a fortune to run in F1 but the costs are much, much lower when you get down to the pecking order.

And, if you have seen the racing, there is usually far more excitement and overtaking in one race in the 'lesser' classes than you see in half-a-season of F1 GPs.

The Speedway GP is our sport's F1 – bikes in domestic UK speedway don't have to be the same.

It's time for those at the top table of British Speedway to be bold.

***Alan South has a home in West Sussex but works all over the country, taking in Speedway meetings as and when he can.**

**The opinions in this article are the writer's own and should not be interpreted as representing the position of Eastbourne Speedway, its directors or promoter.*

SECRETS FROM THE PIT LANE

A Speedway bike looks at first glance like a pretty simple machine. Two wheels – one front, one back – an engine, exhaust pipe and away you go. Appearances can be deceptive.

A Speedway bike is a fickle mistress, as *Flying High* found out when we spoke to Chris Geer, who for many years was in the pits helping Joonas Kylmakorpi as the Finn won long track world titles and starred on the shale for Eastbourne.

There are so many permutations that no wonder riders are always “chasing the set-up”.

Chris lets us into secrets from the pits and explains what some terms you frequently hear actually mean.

Chains

There is some adjustment in the back wheel, about three inches, although some bikes are now built so that you cannot move the back wheel all the way forward.

If you put it back, it makes for a longer wheelbase and, therefore, should be easier to ride and turn. The shorter it is, the more erratic but it can be quicker. Most people run medium/long.

You have between 2 and 8 rollers (spare chain) to play with but it does make a difference in handling of the bike.

Belt drive on the front of the bike: Tuners say it gives more power and better results on the Dyno, but not many people are trying them. You can now buy them off shelf from Scandic and Appleton racing.

We used them with Cam (Woodward) and he loved them.

And some people don't use them because people at the top like Tai Woffinden are not using them. It's a case of sheep and follow the leader.



Gearing

You can drop a tooth if you think you are spinning too much. At Eastbourne you will use from a 62 down to a 60; possibly a 59 but then we are talking Edward Kennett, Cameron Woodward, Joonas in heat 14/15. They would use a 59 and the bike would go 'past' the normal line for the corner and hit the dirt and then they would ride round carrying the speed.

At some of the bigger tracks, like Belle Vue it would be 57 down to a 53.

Rolling chassis

That's everything other than the engine and the carburettor. Jawa are the only company which now makes complete bikes. Fifteen or so years ago, if you bought a brand new bike from Jawa you needed to change 50 per cent of the parts because it wasn't that good.

Nowadays their bikes are made up of parts from other firms. You can buy the rolling chassis from them, put the engine in and go and ride. They are the only company that does that.

The usual way is to buy a rolling chassis and then go to the different suppliers and buy all the various parts needed to complete the bike.

Companies such as Joe Hughes and Alan Bellham will build a bike to your spec or to their established one, if you don't have your own.

Godden, back in the 1980s, were selling complete bikes and they were cheap compared to nowadays. Jawa did the same. Since the layoffs came in and beyond about 2005, everything completely changed.

Seats

Again there are types and shapes. Thick/thin, long and short with different foams. Again, it is all down to personal preference but Chris likes a seat that aids the rider to sit more down in the bike. "You should be sitting down in the middle of the corner and then you have control of the bike rather than the bike controlling you.

"If you don't sit down, when you come out of the corner the bike pulls towards the fence. When you are riding like that and you hit a bit of dirt, the bike takes off.

"In those circumstances you are just on the bike and not in control. It is about being comfortable."



Carburettor

Blixt carb - you can adjust them and change the jetting. Again it depends on how the engine reacts. Sometimes on a hot day on a slick track a setting of 195 might produce the power – but it could also kill the power. It all depends how the engine reacts.

It is always complicated. Nothing is ever easy. It looks so simple but it messes with your head.

Last week, it could have been lovely and warm and you had a 195 and it was working perfectly. The next week it could be cold, damp and miserable and that 195 makes the bikes run badly. It wants more.

(aka a Bluffer's Guide to a Speedway Bike)

The engine

And here's where it gets tricky for the pits team.

Ignition - can be advanced or retarded.

Advancing gets more power and retard flattens.

What you are trying to do is put the power on to the ground.

Sometimes you cannot go down on the rear sprocket too much (we'll come to that) because it will spin up and carry more speed into the corner which will take you past the optimum line.

The next bit is counter-intuitive. You can make the engine slower but actually you will get more grip and go faster.

Adjusting the jet for more fuel will either sharpen the bike up or cause performance to fall off. It is all about how the bike is set up.

No-one knows the set up.

You are always chasing it.

If you have got an engine working you are on a high for a little while until that engine goes back (for service).

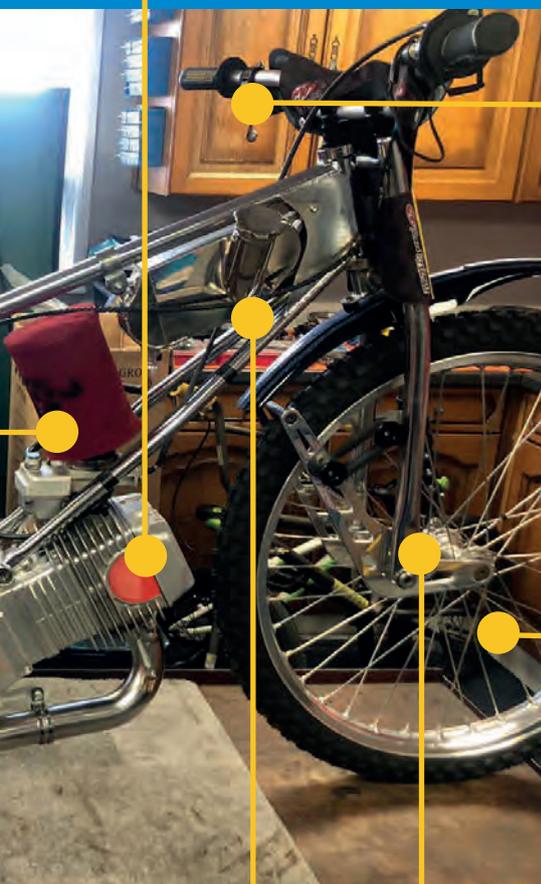
Riders do have engines set up for smaller tracks or bigger tracks.

Chris believes you are better off having power because you can kill the power but you cannot make it stronger or faster.

With Joonas, they went to Norway where the track was 1,100 metres long. Three engines were blown in practice. "We didn't get to two laps and we were left with the fourth engine which he wasn't overly keen on because that really was his Eastbourne engine and Arlington is a 300m track.

"We put the Eastbourne engine in and he won every single race by bike lengths. He was long gone. It was phenomenal. That engine was then doing everything in England, long track and in Poland.

We ended selling it to Timo [Lahti] and that's when he started going good on that engine. We had the tuner so could get another engine as and when we wanted.



Clutch

Hydraulic clutch is more consistent and automatically adjusts. It is always in the same position when you go to tapes. The older wire and lever set-up means you have to make changes and adjust your technique.

"I like hydraulic because you can have a heavy clutch but it feels nice and soft. It is always the same. It is always equal. Joonas was one of the first people to use them and loved it. Everyone is different and some people may not think it feels heavy enough and they don't feel it on their fingers and don't get comfortable with working the clutch. You can have so many set ups with clutches and plates and springs. I have got what I think works and every rider I worked with I set clutches up the same and they seemed to be happy with them," Chris said.



Front wheel

Normally you run the front tyre at 10psi. Some pressure is needed so the front end does not slide away in the corner.

Balancing (bit like you have your car tyres balanced) is important on the bigger tracks where you get your wheels in line and go faster.

Around the smaller Arlington track, it is not quite so important as the rider is nearly always turning - the straights are short.

It is best to balance the wheel to avoid a wobble.

However, if you get behind in a race and your front wheel gets a load of dirt stuck to it, the balance factor has gone out of the window and makes the front heavy.

Chris said they used to rebalance the front tyre every three or four meetings but would "spin" the wheel (tyre) every meeting to ensure even wear.

Small steel ball weights are attached to the spokes to achieve the balance

Diamond

That's the main frame of the bike - the centre of the machine - which holds the engine plates, the clutch and the engine itself. There are a few manufacturers but virtually everyone is using Jawa or Stuha, which are very similar and made in factories which are side by side in the Czech Republic. The people at Stuha used to work at Jawa.

You have a No 1 diamond and a No 4 and the No 4 is more popular in England.

Some people say it turns more easily. The difference comes down to placement of some of the equipment, such as the engine plates which are higher. It gives a different position with the clutch.

Front forks

Speedway tracks are not overly rough. It is not as if you are jumping with the bike, for example. A lot of the riders use a couple of rubber bands and a shock. Hagon Shocks do the job. The forks really don't do that much and the tracks are relatively smooth.

Some riders have a bar at the front and stick their boot on it and push down. Chris Geer has never been with a rider who does that but says it is popular with some, particularly three-times world champion Tai Woffinden. The idea is that you have all the tension down at the tapes. As soon as front wheel bounces on the ground, it acts like a catapult and propels you into the first corner. The bike "springs" forward.

"With speedway, you should be using your body weight to make it to the first corner. If you have your head over the handlebars, you are not going to lift and you make it work."



Handlebars

They have changed from cowboy style of the 1950s/1960s and it is all about being comfortable and how you feel on the bike. There are many different types of handlebars and throttles/controls.

Back tyre

10psi maximum. Minimum might be 5 or 5.5. Any lower you will spin the tyre and turn the valve, causing a puncture. In England you only have one tyre in a meeting.

Lower pressure will equal more traction. You want to get the whole tyre on the base of the track and that means it is working.

Slick track

Eastbourne is slick and Arena Essex was slicker still. The track is hard. It is like digging on a hard garden or Tarmac. There is nothing there. You need a bit of dirt, really.

Deep track

It has a good dirt line. You can get out and hit the dirt and it will power you round the corner. Eastbourne hasn't really had dirt like that for a few years. A deep track will be spongy and tacky. You can put your foot in and kick around.

An alternative view of a Speedway bike



Name: Speedway bike

Age: Dates back to the 1920s

Appearance: Two wheels, an engine, handlebars and seat. There is not much to it at all.

Sounds like a simple piece of kit to use and run: Don't bet on that.

Where can I buy one? You can't.

So, how do you get a Speedway bike? You buy all the individual parts and assemble it yourself or have it built to your specification.

Sounds a bit like the Meccano set I had when I was a schoolboy: Not really, but if you must.

OK, I understand. The crane I built collapsed.

What is the key component of a speedway bike? A diamond.

No wonder they are expensive: It's not a diamond that is mined, cut and put in a ring. It's the core frame of a speedway bike to which all the other pieces are attached.

Oh, I know, like a nine carat diamond: Not at all. Diamond 4 is what you want in England.

Do they change gear when going down the straights? You can't change gear during a race. It's fixed.

So they don't pop into the pits during the race if the gear is wrong, like they do in F1? No. Are you sure you've been to Speedway, or F1 for that matter?

You haven't mentioned the brakes: There you go again. There are none.

No wonder Speedway is an extreme sport: You have to be brave. The faster you go into the corners, the safer it is.

Do say: The track is slick tonight

Don't say: The rider is slick unless you are talking about Eastbourne Seagull, 'Slick' Nick Laurence.

We acknowledge The Guardian, which developed this form of content over many years.



Chris Geer (left) with Trevor Geer and Jason Edwards.

Acknowledgements:

Chris Geer for his technical knowledge, expertise, insights and patience with the writer whose mechanical knowledge is zilch. Thanks also to Chris for the video/photographs.



THE JOHN SOMERVILLE COLLECTION

View and purchase images from the illustrious history of Eastbourne Eagles and the wonderful world of speedway at

www.skidmarks1928.com

The Soaring Seagulls



James Laker

James Laker is 19 and lives in a village in Kent on the outskirts of Sandwich, near Dover.

He works in a small factory making face masks in Sandwich.

His parents are very supportive with dad giving up his spare time to take James all over the place for racing and mum for cleaning the kit.

Without their help, he said, "I wouldn't have the kit and resources to be doing it and for that I'm very thankful."

James has ridden at Arlington many times before, with MSDL teams and when there were second-halves after the meetings. He has also ridden at a variety of tracks across the UK from Plymouth to Redcar.

Q: How did you become interested in Speedway?

A: My family have always been fans of speedway from back from the time of the Canterbury Crusaders. I started watching speedway on TV aged 10 as well as going to local grasstrack meetings.

That led us going to watch the Lakeside Hammers on a Friday night at Arena Essex.

At Lakeside, they had a training track (Hagon Shocks Academy) and I went for my 12th birthday and enjoyed it that much, that I ended up getting my own 150cc bike and was lucky enough to get chosen to ride in the junior races before the start of the meeting at Lakeside.

Q: Why did you want to ride Speedway and what do you love about racing?

A: From a young age I always wanted to have a go at it. It was my dream. When I got told I was going to the Lakeside Academy I was excited to actually give it a go. The thing I love about racing is getting to meet new people and in this sport everyone is friendly. It's also four laps of fast high adrenaline racing where all your problems disappear.

Q: Do you ride any other motor-bikes (eg: grass, moto-cross or road bike)?

A: In 2019 I raced in my first grasstrack meeting. I enjoyed it so much that this winter I've been out and got myself a grasstrack bike and hope that I can do some more of it this year. I also took part in the Pit Bike speedway at Iwade a couple of times in the winter to keep me on a bike and just have a bit of fun.

Q: So far, what's your favourite three-point win?

A: It was probably actually at Arlington, when riding for Kent Kestrels against Reading Racers, I got a 5-1 with team-mate at the time, Andrew Palmer, against two lads who were regular guests for teams in the NL. It was close racing, where they were leading one minute, and we were the next with passing on every lap.



Kevin Whiting

Q: What are your most embarrassing moments (a) on track and (b) off track?

A: On the track was probably forgetting to turn my fuel on in a race and not moving off the line.

Off the track would have to be slipping over with my steel shoe on in front of everyone.

Q: So far, who had had the biggest influence on your career?

A: Definitely has to be my Dad, without him I wouldn't be riding. The amount of time he takes off work to take me to meetings and the amount of money that has been invested in my equipment and kit.

Q: Which two words best sum you up?

A bit of a joker and determined.

Q: If we made a video of you racing, what music would you want to accompany the film?

A: It would have to be 'Waiting All Night' by Rudimental because it's an up-beat and fast and I really think it would match the speed and tempo of the racing, plus it's a banging song!!!!

Q: You can line-up in Heat 15 with any three riders from Speedway history. You are in the race. Who would the other three riders be?

A: At Somerset, one of my favourite tracks. Gate 1: Darcy Ward, Gate 2: me, Gate 3: Jason Doyle, Gate 4: Greg Hancock



CLICK TO WATCH VIDEO



90 Glorious Years of Eastbourne Speedway



PART THREE : THE 1960s

1. Speedway was in a state of flux at the turn of the decade. The top league (National League) was in decline and in 1959 Mike Parker started what was to become a revolution and ran 'unlicensed' meetings with clubs staffed by youngsters, some of whom soon became stars.
2. Eastbourne were set to join a new Provincial League in 1960 but the Speedway Control Board stepped in and ruled out the Eagles (and Rye House) on the grounds that the tracks were not up to standard and that they raced on Sundays.
3. The old Southern Area League (SAL) was no longer viable and Arlington returned to the old routine of challenge matches and individual meetings. Eric Hockaday became Champion of Sussex on June 5 1960.
4. By season's end, Eastbourne had put on a successful programme and with a team consisting of Colin Goody as captain, Jim Heard, Ross Gilbertson, John and Bob Dugard, Dave Still and Bob Warner, had taken on and beaten a number of Provincial League teams.

Eastbourne Speedway can trace its roots right back to the beginnings of the sport in Britain. All being well, in season 2021, the HG Aerospace Eagles will celebrate the club's 90th+ anniversary. In the build-up to the big day, we are featuring some highlights from the past, thanks to author Ken Burnett, who is a member of our media team. This month, the 1960s. You can read a much more detailed account on our website.



Derek Cook



Derek Cook in action for Eastbourne in 1969.



Barry Crowson in 1969

5. The 1961 season began with the customary Easter Trophy, won by Colin Gooddy, who stayed unbeaten throughout the meeting, despite the top-class line-up which included John and Bobby Dugard, Ross Gilbertson, Des Lukehurst and Speedy Pete Jarman.
6. Poole 'Pirates' made their first Arlington appearance in a challenge match on September 3 and, despite a brilliant 11 points by ex-Hastings and Eastbourne rider, Ken Middleditch, lost to the Eagles. Sadly, Ken died earlier this year.
7. In 1962 there was talk of reviving the old Southern Area League and Charlie Dugard still harboured hopes of joining the Provincial League. Work was done to bring the track up to the standard required by the authorities but there were still quibbles from those controlling the sport.
8. The Control Board said it would announce their final decision in May. So it was a somewhat dubious start to the 1962 season as it still wasn't clear whether the Eagles would be operating in the SAL, the Provincial League or neither and this was still the position when the first meeting, the Easter Trophy, won by Poole's Geoff Mudge, took place.

9. The verdict came on May 19 and it was a 'no'. It was too late to start the Southern Area League, so once again it was back to challenge matches which were strangely enough against Provincial League teams. So the track was safe for challenge matches but not for league matches against the same teams. A strange state of affairs.

10. The control board intervened again in 1963 and told Eastbourne they could no longer book top riders from the Provincial and National League for their challenge/individual meetings.

11. Charlie Dugard protested and said without the 'names' crowds would drop. The SCB stood firm and Dugard defied them by staging a 'composite' meeting in June, which included speedway with some riders from the National League. He was fined £20.

12. Eastbourne closed. The riders' association protested and the decision was reversed but too late to save the 1963 season.



Dave Jessup 1968



Tony Hall 1969

13. Before the 1964 season began, Dugard spent about £1,000 on improving the track as a precursor to another application to join the Provincial League. He re-banked the circuit and built a new stand for 1,000 spectators. In the end however, they entered a revived Southern Area League which was renamed the Metropolitan League.

14. The league descended into farce. Exeter B pulled out and other teams failed to complete their fixtures. Not only that, but the riders seemed to swap teams with alarming regularity.

15. Dugard became very disillusioned with the state of lower league speedway and decided to call it a day. Arlington was closed to speedway and concentrated on stock car racing for the next four years, pulling in crowds of more than 8,000.

16. Speedway was back in 1969 with Arlington Promotions – former West Ham manager, journalist and ITV sports commentator, Dave Lanning and Charlie Dugard's son, Bob, with help from old Eagles' favourite, Colin Gooddy. A new era was born.

You can read more about Eastbourne Speedway in the 1960s on the club website.



All images copyright Ken Burnett



Speedway has always prided itself on being a family sport and in this feature we turn the spotlight on families who just love the thrills and spills. This month: Kevin Hall and Yvonne Hall.

THERE WAS A speedway bike on top the wedding cake and Tom Brennan's machine was centre-stage at the reception – we are talking about some more Eastbourne Speedway super fans.

Meet The Halls – Kevin and Yvonne – who migrated to the Arlington terraces after Reading closed. You'll find them on the back straight, almost opposite where the tractors are kept. They're the noisy ones with air horns.

Yvonne grew up in New Zealand and she and her sisters were introduced to speedway by their father.

"I don't know how he came to be interested, probably through friends as I don't believe he went when he was growing up in England," Yvonne told *Flying High*.

Both parents are English and met in "the land of the long white cloud".

"The meetings were great, we had the

No 4: KEVIN and YVONNE HALL



Yvonne and Kevin at Cardiff for a British Grand Prix.

speedway bikes, sidecars and the midget racing. At the end of an evening, we would go round and collect all the glass Coke and Fanta bottles and get two cents for each one.

"I have such vivid memories of wonderful evenings out. If we couldn't go as Dad worked shifts for Air New Zealand, we would sometimes go with our

neighbour or if that wasn't possible, we could lay in bed and hear the sounds if the winds were in the correct direction but just not that wonderful smell. That was hard for sure," she said.

Yvonne clearly had speedway in her blood from being a young child growing up in the Sixties and going to Templeton Speedway. Multi-world champion and Kiwi Ivan Mauger told her the track's name had changed when she spoke to him at Reading Speedway. [It is now known as Ruapuna Park, in Christchurch].

New Zealand has produced three of the most famous world Speedway champions: Ronnie Moore, Barry Briggs and Ivan Mauger and Yvonne saw all three ride, we now have Bradley Wilson Dean coming to follow in those famous footsteps.

"Once in England, I started to follow the Reading Racers, probably from around 1977/1979. I met my first husband through a mutual friend who knew we both had a love of speedway.

"Our first date was to Wimbledon Speedway with Monday nights at Smallmead. My children Zoe and Ben were born in the January and at Smallmead by the April. Start them young as we say."



Yvonne and Kevin with friends at Arlington to see the Eagles in action.

Unlike Yvonne, Kevin is a relatively newcomer to the sport and first went to Reading in 2007.

He has, however, been a Reading football fan all his life.

Kevin said: "The speedway stadium was next to the ground and you could hear the bikes from the stadium so thought I would go along to see what it was all about.

"I was hooked straight way.

"Reading rode on a Monday night and I would finish work at 5pm and be at the track by 5.15pm.

"I was straight into the clubhouse for the customary burger and chips and then off to my favourite spot on bends 3/4 before anyone else could take it."

Kevin and Yvonne met at Smallmead at the beginning of the 2008.

Yvonne recalls: "There was a group of us including my kids and there was this guy standing at the back of us looking all lonely, so I started chatting to him.

"The rest is history as they say."

Kevin added: "Yes, we met at Reading Speedway.

"She was always chatting through the races as I tried to watch, maybe it is true women can multi-task but it was frustrating."

Sadly, Reading Speedway closed at the end of the 2008 campaign and Kevin and Yvonne came to Eastbourne.

They live not far off the M3 in Hampshire and choose Arlington because it was a Saturday track.

"We were never going to go to Swindon as Kevin supports Reading FC," said Yvonne, "although it is a bit nearer than Eastbourne. Poole was out of the question because we would always have had to take a half day to get there, especially with all the summer traffic."

Kevin added: "When we saw that Eastbourne rode on a Saturday night we decided to go to Arlington as you had the day down in Eastbourne and the surrounding area before the meeting."

Naturally, Smallmead at Reading Speedway will always have great memories for the couple.

Kevin's 40th birthday was celebrated at the Berkshire track.

Yvonne said: "It was a surprise for him, everyone in our little group brought something and it was all set up on a table, balloons, birthday cake a great night.

"Daughter Zoe made what she thought would be a life-long friend through Reading Speedway, Jessica. They used to get together at meetings and also when her and her family went to Cardiff. "Sadly, in 2018 she suddenly passed away."

Speedway has given Kevin and Yvonne some wonderful memories...

- Going to Somerset when Bradley Wilson Dean had just joined and he seemed so pleased to see some friendly faces;
- Eastbourne dinner and dances with Yvonne dancing to the Black Eyed Peas with Simon Gustafsson when he tied balloons to the bow on the back of her dress;
- Lewis Bridger standing on a chair as Kevin is so tall;
- Talking to Matej Zagar and finding he knew Fleet well as he stayed with people in Yateley, just a few miles from where they live;
- Herstmonceux Castle was fabulous where they made some new speedway friends, sadly due to Covid-19 not seen since;
- The Boship hotel where Sarah Holt asked Yvonne to provide desserts which she did for 150 people with open arms;
- Yvonne doing the sponsored bike ride with Tai Woffinden at Cardiff and meeting and chatting to Tai and Greg Hancock, riding her bike around the Cardiff stadium and talking to Ole Olsen another hero.

And like most speedway supporters, they have found some fantastic friends through Speedway. ➤

A Speedway Wedding



IT SEEMED RIGHT TO Kevin and Yvonne that they would have a Speedway themed wedding. It was the sport which brought them together and both like to be slightly different.

The first hurdle was overcome when Martin Dugard agreed in March 2016 that it would be possible to get a bike to the venue in deepest Hampshire.

- Tables names were Speedway tracks they had visited
- The top table was Arlington
- The wedding cake made by talented daughter-in-law Louise. It had a Speedway bike on the top
- They walked down the aisle together to St Elmo's Fire (the song which rings out around Arlington after an Eagles victory).

The wedding made a whole page in the programme a few meetings later.

"I had a phone call from Connor (Dugard) in the morning to say 'don't panic but might not be there till early afternoon' as there was an issue with the van," Yvonne recalls. "Kelsey wanted the van but never told Connor, so he had to do a mad dash to borrow Martin's van.

"The bike changed we believe at the last minute as well and to my surprise we had Tom's current bike which happened to be very green and the colours of our wedding were green and red.

"We both appreciated the effort Martin and Connor went to from the initial conversation to the bike at our wedding. Not one person knew about it, so it was a great surprise and sat at the bottom of a spiral staircase on full view." ■

◀ Kevin explained: "We have met and made many friends through Speedway. We have good friends who are Wolves fans [Tim, Claire, Becky and Lucy, who live near Canterbury] and we met them at Eastbourne. "We're still in touch with people from the Reading days [Brian and Sharon]."

Yvonne added: "It was great to bump into them at Cardiff a few years back and now we go for a meal afterwards. I am sure the first year we had hangovers the following day! "We have met the Chalmers family through Eastbourne and are now good friends who we see away from Speedway."

"We have become friendly with a lovely elderly lady Susan Fitzpatrick who sits in the bottom part of the grandstand. She was originally a Wimbledon fan and still wears the colours."

"Susan attends alone now as sadly her husband's health has stopped him attending meetings, Susan relies on



Yvonne met Tai Woffinden and Greg Hancock at Cardiff after completing the Sponsored Bike Ride for Great Ormond Street Hospital.

people to get her to and from the track. She told us a story once of Cameron Woodward taking her home as she was still standing by the entrance in the dark waiting for a taxi that failed to show." 🌟

STILL CHASING AUTOGRAPHS!



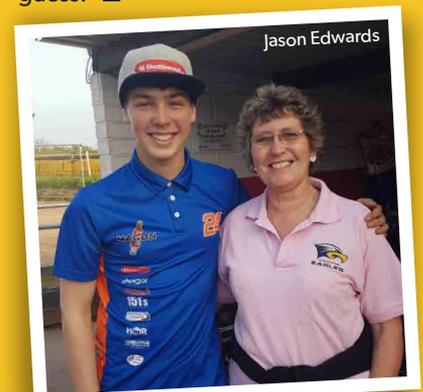
YVONNE IS STILL chasing autographs after all these years. "Even at my ripe old age, I am always after my photo with riders and have been known to sit in a bar on the Friday afternoon in Cardiff waiting to see how many riders I can have photos with."



"One Cardiff photo memory was getting a photo with me and Emil [Sayfutdinov] and Rosco [Alun Rossiter] took the photo of us!"

"Then there was Tai as he was driving out and stopped and the year that Ivan Mauger, Barry Briggs and Leigh Adams had books out. I got a photo and signed books."

"All the riders have time for you which is lovely and makes Speedway one happy family. So many to mention over the years, will always be a kid, I guess." ■



The agony...

THE ELITE LEAGUE Play Off final between Reading and Peterborough in 2006. The teams had finished level on points at the end of the regular season and navigated their way to what turned out to be a dramatic and controversial final. Reading established an early lead in the home leg that was pegged back by the Panthers' use of the tactical rule. In the end it was only a two-point lead that was taken to the East of England Showground.

The second leg was a tight affair and there was no opportunity for Reading to use a tactical and in the end they lost by one point on aggregate. Yvonne recalls: "The coach up to Peterborough was full of fun."

"However, the return journey was not so. To this day we feel cheated by Peterborough and that will live with me forever."

...and the ecstasy

"My favourite season was when Eastbourne were in the National League and won all the trophies/cups and finished off by winning the league." Yvonne



EAGLES McFLY AGAIN

1985 ...the start of the a glorious era

LIVE AID, BORIS Becker, EastEnders and Back To The Future.

Oh what a year, 1985.

A bittersweet 12 months of emotions. The epic blockbuster movie with Marty McFly and Doc Brown and that DeLorean but the horrors of football disasters at Heysel and Bradford.

Albert Square first hit our TV screens, Dirty Den, Angie and all. But Boomtown Rat Bob Geldof dominated the year, turning rock star into charity campaigner. Who could forget 100,000 at Wembley for Live Aid, scorching hot day, Status Quo's Rockin' All Over The World and Queen's epic Radio Ga Ga.

In sport it was Everton who won Division One but a sensational Norman Whiteside curling effort denied them a double in the FA Cup as Manchester United took the glory in extra-time. The biggest sporting fairytale was at Wimbledon, 17-year-old Boris 'Boom Boom' Becker winning in some style.

But while he was taking the plaudits in SW19 on July 7 1985, 50 miles away in BN27, another teenager was also making his mark.

The second leg of the 1985 KO Cup final has lived long in the memories of all Eastbourne fans who were at Ellesmere Port. Last month we told tales from the 'KO Cup final like no other'.

We continue the story this month with some fabulous stories from Phil Lanning, memories from Ellesmere Port supporters and Kevin Ling walks us along the road to the final.



Martin Dugard practices in 1985.

Having just turned 16, Martin Dugard, wearing his uncle Eric's old pale blue and white leathers and one of Kelly Moran's stars and stripes helmets, scored paid seven points on his debut in Eastbourne's home win over Exeter.

It was a moment that would transform a mediocre campaign into something quite sensational.

The Eagles, on their return to the National League, had been ordinary to say the least. Ellesmere Port had drawn at Arlington while the Sussex side hadn't come close to a result on their travels. But a mid-season shuffle changed all that. Out went Mick Hines and Derek Harrison, replaced by gangly Andy Buck and young maestro Dugard.

While the National League campaign was destined for mediocrity, the Eagles had already saved their best displays for the KO Cup, scraping past Canterbury in the first round before comfortably disposing of Milton Keynes.

But now came the big test, a quarter-final tie with old enemy Wimbledon. This would be the beginning of a very special run of six glorious ties.

The Dons had already romped past the Eagles home and away in early season challenges.

But this was a very different Sussex side. Nonetheless, at Plough Lane Wimbledon looked set to deliver a healthy first leg lead with three races to go and six points in front.

However, Colin Richardson was in the mood. He produced an outstanding five-ride 15-point maximum and his tac sub 5-1 with Gordon Kennett in Heat 11 set-up a cracking finale and shock 39-39 draw. The Eagles completed the job at Arlington 44-33 and lined up another tasty clash with title contenders Middlesbrough.

The Tigers, without their own wonderkid Gary Havelock, were smashed 49-29 in Sussex with Kennett and Richardson unbeaten and Dugard adding two wins. In the meantime, league form was awful.



Eagles press day 1985. Back row, from left: Mark Summerfield, Keith Pritchard, Russell Lanning, Mick Hines. On bikes: Gordon Kennett, Derek Harrison, Colin Richardson. Kneeling: Chris Mulvihill, Paul Clarke

Meeting statistics

Ellesmere Port 41 Eastbourne 37

Ellesmere Port

Dave Morton	2	2	3	1*	9+1
David Walsh	1*	R	2*	1	4+2
Joe Owen	3	2	2	2	9
Louis Carr	3	2	3	2	3 13
Gary O'Hare	0	1*	ns	1*	2+2
Richie Owen	1	1	0		2
Phil Alderman	0	1*	1*		2+2

Team managers: Stan Ward
and Chris Bond

Eastbourne

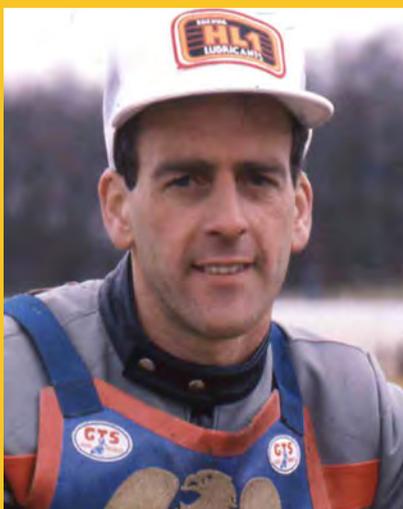
Gordon Kennett	3	3	3	3	12
Keith Pritchard	0	0	1	0	1
Andy Buck	2	3	3	1	9
Paul Clarke	1*	1	0	0	2+1
Colin Richardson	2	3	2	0	7
Martin Dugard	3	1	0	4	
Chris Mulvihill	2*	0	ef		2+1

Team manager: Russell Lanning

Referee: Mr J. Miller

Heat details

Ht 1: Kennett, Morton, Walsh, Pritchard, 68.3 (3-3; 35-49)
 Ht 2: Dugard, Mulvihill, R. Owen, Alderman, 70.5 (1-5; 4-8; 36-54)
 Ht 3: Carr, Richardson, Clarke, O'Hare, 68.2 TR (3-3; 7-11; 39-57)
 Ht 4: J. Owen, Buck Owen, Mulvihill, 70.2 (4-2; 11-13; 43-59)
 Ht 5: Kennett, Carr, O'Hare, Pritchard, 68.8 (3-3; 14-16; 46-62)
 Ht 6: Buck, Morton, Dugard, Walsh (ef), 69.8 (2-4; 16-20; 48-66)
 Ht 7: Richardson, J. Owen, Clarke, R. Owen, 70.1 (2-4, 18-24; 50-70)
 Ht 8: Carr (t/s), Walsh, Pritchard, Mulvihill (ef), 70.6 (5-1; 23-25; 55-71)
 Ht 9: Buck, Carr, Alderman, Dugard, 69.6 (3-3; 26-28; 58-74)
 Ht 10: Morton, Richardson, Walsh, Clarke, 71.1 (4-2; 30-30; 62-76)
 Ht 11: Kennett, J. Owen, Alderman, Pritchard, 70.0 (3-3, 33-33; 65-79)
 Ht 12: Carr, Morton, Buck, Richardson, 70.5 (5-1; 38-34; 7-80)
 Ht 13: Kennett, J. Owen, O'Hare, Clarke, 70.4 (3-3; 41-37; 73-83)



Gordon Kennett

◀ Two home and away defeats before the return on Teesside. And that would be a proper nerve-jangler.

Boro hit three 5-1s in the opening four heats in the rain and Eagles were on the ropes.

It was all level on aggregate with the Tigers having clawed back the 20-point deficit going into the final heat. But Bucky was the hero with real bottle to deliver a courageous win over Steve Wilcock, Kennett third and Eastbourne were in the final.

Now it was the biggie and against National League champions-elect Ellesmere Port.

In a controversial move, the Eagles management Bob Dugard and Russell Lanning decided to switch the riding order, putting Kennett at No.2, Buck at No.3 and Richardson at No.4. It certainly worked. An incredible start saw the home side take four 5-1s in the opening five races and then three successive 4-2s to lead 35-11.

But the Gunners were far from goners. They hit back with two maximums of their own to reduce the deficit to 46-32 for the return to Thornton Road. This clash was far from over, especially in the knowledge that Ellesmere had dumped the Eagles 50-28 earlier in the campaign.

The Eagles team travelled to Edinburgh for their final away National League clash on the Wednesday night, taking out a narrow win. Then spent the day at Blackpool Pleasurebeach on the Thursday night before the crunch second leg against the Gunners 24 hours later.

Jennifer Rush's Power of Love was belting out around a bitterly cold Thornton Road and Eagles fans steeled themselves for a tense night and an

undoubted rearguard action from a Gunners onslaught.

But it was a sensational performance from the Sussex men.

At 15-years-old, I vividly remember standing on the third bend with the Eagles fans, next to Margaret Dugard. This was to be one of my favourite meetings of all-time.

After a false start in Heat 1, in the re-run Kennett stormed to a win in a track record time. Then came the first killer blow. Next time out, Dugard stormed from the outside gate with Chris Mulvihill to deliver a crushing psychological blow 5-1 and further increase the lead on aggregate.

Louis Carr broke the track record again to win Heat 3 but successive wins for Kennett, Buck and Richardson produced the perfect stonewalling job, Buck's sublime third bend pass of Dave Morton in Heat 6 the highlight.

The Gunners hit back with a 5-1 in Heat 8 thanks to Carr's tactical sub ride and a 4-2 drew them level at Heat 10, but they had run out of time.

Appropriately it was the powerhouse captain Kennett in Heat 11, with his third win, that wrapped up the KO Cup in emphatic style.

Indeed, Kennett completed his full maximum in the final heat. Gunners had done enough to win on the night but were visibly stunned in the pits by how impressive Eastbourne had performed.

The Eagles team celebrated with dinner at a local Berni Inn with the KO Cup sat proudly in the middle of the long dining table.

It was a Cup that would never leave possession of the Dugard family and Eastbourne.



Arena-Essex's Bob Humphreys leads Gordon Kennett at Arlington.

Phil Lanning

The film of the year may have been Back To The Future. In National League speedway terms, the Eagles were truly back and the future was all blue and yellow. Memories from our contributors give you a real feeling of that night of drama.

A contemporary report in a Sussex local newspaper of the second leg said the home crowd was stunned by the Eagles who had wrapped up the issue with three races to spare. Gordon Kennett was in vintage form and hit a 12-point maximum, the first visitor to ride unbeaten at Port in 1985. Kennett, as skipper, received the cup from multi-world champion, Ivan Mauger. 🦋



Gordon Kennett gets bumps at Canterbury after winning last heat decider in KO Cup first round

Phil Lanning

Eastbourne's road to final

KEVIN LING was with the Eagles every step of the way as they criss-crossed the country before finally landing the cup at Ellesmere Port.

Eastbourne were nearly out before they hardly got started and there was an almighty scare in the semi-final.

First round

The Eagles nearly went out against bitter rivals Canterbury. The home leg was won 47-31 but the Crusaders made it tight with a 45-33 win on their own shale.

Kevin recalls the Kingsmead match:

"Canterbury were in the ascendancy and it was two wins in the last two heats, one from Colin Richardson and the other from Gordon Kennett, that saw us home. It was one of those where you always felt we were loosening our grip. A Crusaders 5-1 in either of those heats would have pulled them level but it was those two races that saw us home. We could have been out. It was a close call."

Second round

A much easier tie for the Sussex side with the Eagles winning both legs: 50-28 at Arlington and 42-36 at Milton Keynes.

"We had signed Andy Buck in the place of Mick Hines and that was his debut at Milton Keynes. Colin Richardson got 11 from four rides and Andy Buck scored, I think, ten. Straight away we knew we had a little gem.

"Keith Pritchard scored, really, really well. The hard work had been done and we beat them at home by 22 points but the enduring memory of the tie was the Andy Buck debut."

Quarter Final

A 39-39 draw at Wimbledon was where the hard work was done. It was wrapped up on home soil with a 44-33 win.

"The draw broke Wimbledon's hearts but the highlight of that night was a 15-point maxim for Colin Richardson, a former Wimbledon rider," Kevin said.

"A 4-2 in the final race gave us the draw. Gordon Kennett beat Mike Ferreira and Martin Dugard, in one of his early outings, beat Wimbledon heat leader Jamie Luckhurst.

"Wimbledon finished third in the league and we despatched them in the quarter final. Middlesbrough eventually finished second in the league and we beat them in the semi and we beat the team who won the league in the final."

Semi-Final

If you are looking for controversy in a cup run, this is where it really was. Eastbourne saw off Middlesbrough by the narrowest of margins.

The Teesside outfit won their home (second) leg 48-30 as the Eagles nearly let slip a 49-29 lead from Arlington.

There were huge arguments at Middlesbrough over the composition of the Eagles team with the meeting taking place on a circuit that looked more like a quagmire than a speedway track.

Kevin Ling remembers there was huge row about the inclusion of Paul Clarke in the Eagles team for the second leg.

"He had announced his retirement for about a week. The semi-final was in the midst of four away matches in four days and he didn't ride in the preceding league matches.

"Because Eastbourne had so many injuries, he agreed to ride in the semi-final. They said he was retired and he was ineligible. My view was that he was still a contracted rider. He scored three points, which given the lottery of the conditions, you could have put anybody in and they could have scored three points.

"The two Middlesbrough riders he beat were the emerging talent of Gary

Havelock and Geoff Pusey, so they were two notable scalps.

"He was our rider and rode for us on that occasion. It rained throughout the meeting. It was tipping it down all the time. Eastbourne asked the referee to inspect the track after about heat eight or nine and he said it was fit to continue.

"The Middlesbrough fans were made up with that but at the end of the meeting when we did take it off them with a 4-2 in the last race, they were all very upset.

"There were three of us dancing on the dog track and hugging each other. The home fans in the stand behind us were not happy."

National League KO Cup Final

And so to Ellesmere Port for D-Day.

Kevin said: "Ellesmere Port were very, very good. Joe Owen, Louis Carr, who became a stand out rider in the league, and Dave Morton were the heat leader trio. They had Dave Walsh as well and were an exceptional side.

"They got an early season draw at Arlington but that was a fortunate point as they came back from six points behind with two heats to go.

Gordon (Kennett) fell in his last ride after getting straight wins and they needed to get a 5-1 and a 4-2 in the last two races.

"They beat us fairly and squarely up there in the league."

Kevin and some friends went to Ellesmere Port the long way round. They watched the Eagles win at Edinburgh on the Wednesday night and moved on to Sheffield for the match against King's Lynn on the Thursday.

It was a resounding 63-15. However, it wasn't the match that brings back the memories. ➤

◀ “We were standing by the pits and listening principally to Port riders Dave Morton and Dave Walsh. They saw we were Eastbourne supporters and were taking the juice, saying more or less we didn’t stand a hope in hell and the cup was in the bag. They were so cocksure of themselves but it was a different story the following day.”

Kevin was not totally without hope before the match began at Ellesmere Port. “I had seen Eastbourne pull off similar performances before and, as they say, when the going gets tough, the tough get going. I always thought we stood a good chance. We had a 14-point lead and when you look down our team you felt anything was possible, or at least should have been.”

The match started brilliantly for Eastbourne with Gordon Kennett coming from the back in heat one to beat Dave Morton and equal the track record. “Every time something momentous happened, we all rushed down to the safety fence, jumping up and hanging over it,” Kevin said.

“The Ellesmere Port reserves had dominated heat two pretty much week after week on their home track.

“It was difficult to see because it was quite dark and I thought in heat two that it was their rider in the lead.

Then I saw Chris Mulvihill come into second place and I thought that’s not bad, it’s only a 4-2 to them.

“When they got further round I realised it was Martin Dugard in front and Mulvihill in second place and we had a 5-1 which no other team had done at Ellesmere Port that season. All of a sudden here was that realisation that it was those two and what a race.”

It certainly was game on and the feeling was strengthened when Gordon Kennett came from the back to beat Louis Carr in heat five.

“Andy Buck beat Dave Morton in heat six and Colin Richardson came from the back to pip Joe Owen on the line to take heat seven. “That really got us up on the fence cheering.

“Louis Carr came out as a tac sub in heat eight and got a 5-1 but Buck beat him in the following race by coming from the back to pip the Port rider on the line, just as Colin Richardson had done against Joe Owen.

“With that, we were still two points ahead on the night and the cup was almost in the bag, if it wasn’t already.

“Towards the end we had two incredible races. Gordon came from the back twice to beat Joe Owen in heats 11 and 13. It was the most brilliant maximum as you would ever see. Virtually every win that night was from the back. He was an absolute powerhouse.” ■

Port view

ELLESMERE PORT SUPPORTER Steve Wilkes said: “I do remember the cup final from 1985. As a Gunners fan, I remember being rather surprised that the points deficit was higher than expected.

“My main memories were Gordon Kennett breaking the track record in heat 1 and being unbeaten on the night. Strangely, Gordon had only scored nine points at Thornton Road in the league fixture in the summer.

“Louis Carr then broke Gordon’s track record in heat 3 to enter the record books as the last (unknown at the time) ever rider to do this. I do recall Andy Buck brilliantly taking the mighty Joe Owen from the back in heat 4.

“At this point I knew ‘the game was up’ and with the remaining heats taking place just trying to win the match (which we did 41-37).

“A deserved win for the Eagles and

decent crowd to boot; sadly not enough over to keep the Gunners riding the following season and it was also the last full meeting Joe Owen rode in before his accident at Birmingham two days later.

Phil Harding added:

“I think even before the final we knew it would be really tough against Eastbourne and they were deserving winners. Shame we never got the chance to go again in ‘86.”

Nick Budd: “Thing that I remember was how much dirt was on the track for the 2nd leg, was unbelievable amount and it was strange because we hadn’t done that all season and our team never got to grips with it.”

Jeff Radcliffe recalled: “I certainly remember that night. It was in the second half that I broke my shoulder, made rather a mess of the fence as well.”

**Via the Ellesmere Port Gunners Memories Facebook Group.*

Port’s run to the final

ELLESMERE PORT saw off Edinburgh in the first round of the KO Cup, Birmingham in round two and recorded big home and away wins against Berwick in the quarter finals.

It was touch and go in the semi-final against Hackney. The Gunners opened up a 50-28 lead in the home leg but were nearly pegged back at Waterden Road where the Hawks won 49-29.

There is one sad note to recall about Eastbourne’s cup success. Two days later as the Gunners wrapped up the league title with a win at Birmingham, the Gunners’ Joe Owen fell and that tragically left him paralysed and confined to a wheelchair.



Dave Mullett leads Kennett in Heat 1 at Canterbury in KO Cup first round, second leg

THE EAGLE-EYED among you may have noticed some small discrepancies in the recollections of the match, and that is no surprise after all this time.

We have referred to the programme John Ling filled in on the night at Ellesmere Port. He shows that in heat one, Gordon Kennett equalled the track record in a time of 68.3. He too has Andy Buck as the winner of the Rider of the Night Final from Gordon Kennett, Louis Carr and Colin Richardson (ef). However, a contemporary report in a Sussex local newspaper said Gordon Kennett won the second-half final.



How times change...

Frank Bettis leads from Olle Nygren, Brian Wilson and Jack Young at Glasgow in 1949.

Peter Morrish - The John Somerville Collection

FRANK BETTIS WAS a regular for the Eagles in 1957, 58 and 59 and at the time lived near to the West Ham track in east London.

Flying High contributor Ken Burnett interviewed Frank in the 1980s by which time the former rider was living not that far from Arlington in the Hastings area.

What emerged was a story that now beggars belief on how Frank came on occasion to Arlington.

Nowadays, we see riders with smart sign-written vans, a stable of expensive bikes in the back and all the bits and pieces they might need.

There was none of that in the late 1950s when Britain was finally rebuilding and throwing off the long shadow of World War Two.

It was a time when Prime Minister Harold Macmillan, who had a home at Horsted Keynes about 20 miles north of Arlington, told the nation in 1957: "You've never had it so good."

At that time Hailsham had a railway station and you could get a direct train from London which ran through Tunbridge Wells and Heathfield.

In part, it was known as the Cuckoo Line and nowadays the trackbed south of Heathfield has been turned into a trail for cyclists and walkers, known as the Cuckoo Trail.

Frank told Ken that when he lived in West Ham he would ride his road bike to the station in London and get the train to Hailsham.

From Hailsham, he would ride it to the track, strip it down and practice at Arlington.

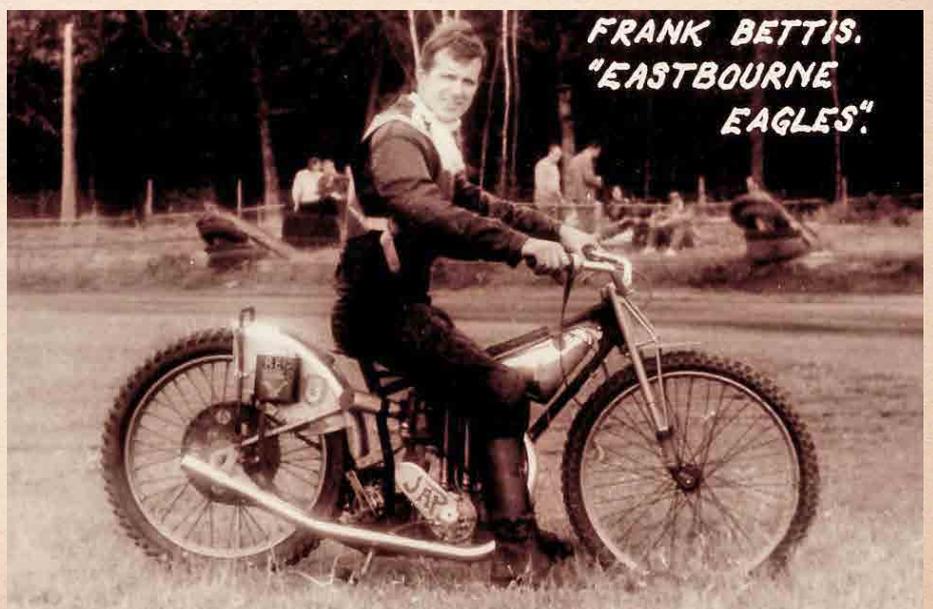
Session over, he would clean the machine, put it back together and ride back to Hailsham station and get the train back to London with the bike in the guard's van. At the other end he would ride home.

Imagine, if you will, Edward Kennett hopping on to his speedway bike outside his Hailsham home and gunning it along the A22 and down Arlington Road West.

And a railway station in Hailsham ...that was a good idea but that disappeared like many speedway tracks have done. ■



Wright Wood - The John Somerville Collection



Frank Bettis with a gleaming JAP

T2TV - Ken Burnett



David Graveling Property Maintenance

Tiffani Graveling

David Graveling Property Maintenance undertakes property maintenance in the Hastings, Bexhill, Battle area, plus across East Sussex, into Kent and sometimes up to London.

Most aspects of property maintenance are covered with specialist contractors brought in to do the work.

David has been involved in this line of work since 1995.

"I set up with my granddad, Ted. He was working in the Pett area (between Hastings and Rye) and getting on a bit. He needed a hand so I left the job I was in and started helping him; gardening and patios to begin with. I got my own work from there and it just snowballed," David said.

Most of the work comes through personal recommendations.

David is one Jason Edwards' sponsors, is proud that in the programme he is the heat one sponsor and has a banner on the air fence.

Q. When did you first go to a speedway match and where was that?

It was to Arlington. I was friends with Mark Harris, who was a relation of Steve Weatherley, when we were at school. I went over to the speedway with him in 1980, I think. I went for three or four years and then moved away for work. I stopped going then, just the odd meeting here and there.

I think it was 2007 when I started back again properly. I brought my son, then my daughter Tiffani started coming and my wife, Elaine too. My son and my wife stopped but I kept going, and obviously Tiffani as well (you may have seen many of her photographs in the Eastbourne programme).

Q. Did you become a regular immediately, or did the speedway 'bug' take time to bite?

It was instant, only work which stopped me going. I was working as a chef and my hours were such that I didn't have the time to go. Things changed and then I got back into it straight away.



David Graveling with a presentation from Jason Edwards showing his appreciation for sponsorship.

Tiffani Graveling

Q. What attracts you most to speedway?

It is being part of the whole race and the interaction with the riders. There are not many sports where you can talk face-to-face with the riders and even world champions. You can approach them and talk to them. It makes you feel much more part of the meeting.

You can sit on the terraces, watch them race and then go and talk to them afterwards.

It is also the excitement of the racing where you see them all the time, unlike say F1. With Speedway, if there is an incident, you see it as it happens.

Q. What would you change about speedway, if you could?

Simplify the rules. Other than that, not much else. The rulebook is so old and dated. It just needs simplifying so everyone can understand it. I also don't like gimmicky things, such as when there were double points. How do you explain that to newcomers. If you relate that to football, it would be that the next goal Marcus Rashford (Manchester United FC) scores counts as two.

Q. What is or was your favourite track?

Arlington and second Peterborough because of the speed. I have never seen a bad meeting there.

Q. Who is your favourite rider of all time?

Nicki Pedersen. He was box office for Eastbourne. No-one thought a rider like that would come to Eastbourne. He was guaranteed pretty much double figure points every time. He drew the crowds.

Q. What are your final thoughts?

The nice thing about the sport is the 'Speedway family'. Within the groups who travel, there is great friendship. It is a Marmite sport, you love it or hate. There doesn't seem be many people in between.

I have my work friends, I play pool when we can in a team and they are my social friends and then I have my Speedway friends.

I enjoy the social side, the travelling, going with Brian (Jones) to different parts of the country, staying over. It is all about the interaction with the riders, the friendship and the general enjoyment of travelling with fellow fans. 🐦



Jason Edwards is sponsored by David Graveling Property maintenance

Mike Hinves



07976652813 / 01424 428311
www.davegraveling.co.uk

David Graveling
Property Maintenance

- GENERAL
- ELECTRICAL
- PLUMBING
- DECORATING
- CARPENTRY

Building Back Better?



Karal Wlosek

SPEEDWAY HAS BEEN losing land battles since it came to these shores in the 1920s, so is it remotely possible for the sport to win ongoing fights for recognition, respect, and resources in 2021? In broad terms, recent history may suggest not.

The demand for housing (in our case) or a change of use (see Rye House) especially in prime locations, seems never ending and recent proposed changes to planning law would appear to make it easier for speculators, developers, and house builders to acquire planning permission at the expense of the sport we love.

There have been some relatively recent successes though – look at the rebirth of Leicester Lions and the construction of the brand-new National Speedway Stadium at Belle Vue within the last ten years – so all is not lost.

Leicester's success was built, literally, on a dynamic partnership with British Cycling and the desire of the local authority to regenerate an unloved and under-appreciated area of the city.

Belle Vue was able to 'piggy-back' on the long-term regeneration of East Manchester and a stated aim of the city authorities to make Manchester a city of sporting excellence.

Finding partners is a key driver to progress and our plan includes collaborating with education and other sports and leisure businesses.

As many fans will be aware, Thurrock Hammers Ltd (THL) is trying to re-establish speedway in its South West Essex home after the Lakeside club was



Speedway tracks seem to fall victim to closure and disappearance far too often. A look at the website defunct speedway.co.uk is a fascinating glimpse of the past, but a sad one when you realise what we once had.

Eastbourne and our Essex neighbours, Lakeside, enjoyed fierce rivalry over the years but that's gone with the Arena Essex stadium in developer's hands.

Mark Sexton is one of a group trying to bring the sport back to Thurrock and, as most of you will know, our MSDL side is sponsored by The Save Thurrock Hammers campaign.

In this article, Mark shows just how hard the campaign has to work and will be typical of the efforts put in around the country by similar groups.

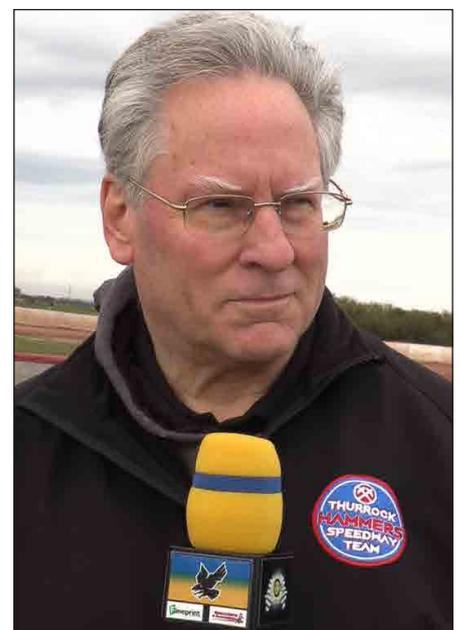
forced out of its Arena Essex base in 2018.

When the club closed, it effectively saw the end of speedway as a spectator sport in the London area as well. This, frankly, is nothing less than a sporting scandal.

This article is a brief account of the strategy that THL is employing.

It will explain the challenges we face and what we are doing to educate, explain and persuade the public and the various decisions makers to support our vision of a facility that has a speedway track and business as its cornerstone but one which also adds real value to the community.

It will also try and explain what hurdles need to be cleared, what we have learned from other clubs' experience and from dealing with our local authority planning department.



Mark Sexton

Three long standing members of the Lakeside club now run Thurrock Hammers.

Ian Smalley had been its Media and Marketing Manager, Russell Keetch the Commercial Manager and Mark Sexton had created and run the Community Liaison programme for over a decade.

Both Mark and Russ attended the first meetings at the Arena in 1984 so are deeply committed to seeing the club survive.

Ian's speedway teeth were cut at New Hammond Road, Boston, also in the 1980s, but like Mark and Russ, his involvement with the Hammers goes back many years.

We have been supported all along by Brian Connolly whose speedway heritage goes back further than any of us. Brian is from Manchester and, at heart, a big Aces fan.

He is also the driving force behind the successful 'Mauger Campaign' that has seen recent official recognition for Ivan in Stockport which will see a commemorative 'blue plaque' being unveiled on the house he lived in during the 1970s.

Brian has never forgotten, or forgiven, how Hyde Road was lost to the sport and has worked tirelessly with THL for the past two years and his contribution has been immense.

He grew up less than half a mile from the old Belle Vue track never, for a moment, believing that the world famous 'Zoo' would ever be lost.

During its lifetime at Lakeside, the Community Programme was a very successful vehicle for engaging with a wide range of people within Thurrock including the local MP, Jackie Doyle-Price, local councillors, and senior members of the local authority including the Chief Executive and Planning Department.

Local authority planners, for the most part, are required to put into action ('execute') decisions agreed in a Local Plan (LP), a document that gets reviewed, on average, every 12-15 years or so.

One of the challenges, therefore, is for speedway to feature consistently in the next Local Plan. In the case of Thurrock, their LP has been 'in negotiation' for a number of years and, despite being overdue, is still being redrafted. This of course does provide an opportunity for speedway and it is something the club is working on.

Thurrock Council has a wide number of local sport and leisure policies and, of course, there are national planning frameworks that must be conformed with.

In our case, THL are leaning very heavily on these frameworks and policies

Background

Wally Mawdsley and Chick Woodroffe created the Arena Essex Hammers in 1984 but it was Stuart Douglas and Jon Cook who held the promotional reins, with the club riding as the Lakeside Hammers, between 2007 and 2018.

The Arena Essex and Lakeside clubs were long-term tenants at the Arena Essex Raceway, a facility that was also home to four-wheel motor sport but one that lately, by common consent, had definitely seen better days.

The Woodroffe family had owned and managed the site since the 1970s but investment was sporadic and there was relatively little upgrading of the stadium during the Douglas/Cook tenure.

On the contrary, we saw deliberate attempts to make the site less amenable to licensees like the Hammers. The 125-acre site was ripe for development and frequently quoted as being 'at risk' of development and had been the subject of a Compulsory Purchase Order in 2007.

The 125-acre site was ripe for development and frequently quoted as being 'at risk' and, after

attempting to realise the land asset for many years, in 2018 Woodroffe's daughter, Lesley Wootten, finally sold the land to London Strategic Land, a company whose business is to acquire land and secure planning permission before selling on to a housebuilder or developer.

The final sale of the Arena definitely wasn't a surprise but it was a huge disappointment to find that the current owner will not entertain continued motorsport use and no less of a shock for the club to actually find itself homeless.



The Arena Essex team from 1987.

The John Somerville Collection

especially where they clearly state that sporting facilities, such as the Raceway, and the sports that took place there, should not be lost for the purposes of development.

Owners and developers of sites, especially very large-scale projects, are required by law to provide financial contributions (sometimes referred to as section 106 money or via a Community Infrastructure Levy) to mitigate any negative impact of the development or to provide replacement or alternative facilities needed to support that development.

Developers know their legal responsibilities but understandably, look to keep their financial contributions to the minimum.

Their plans may also look to work around the requirement to provide alternative facilities which is the situation that Thurrock finds itself in.

LSL's planning application (18/1671/FUL) proposes to replace the motor sport facilities (track/pits etc.) with a Lido and a Mountain Bike trail which, if approved, would obviously see the end of speedway at the Arena Essex site.

THL, naturally, is absolutely and unconditionally opposed to this and

therefore, as part of the legal planning process, we submitted a formal objection to the planning application that LSL had submitted in November 2018.

This rather weighty and detailed document is available to view on our website (www.thurrockhammers.com)

The scale of the planning application at the Arena Essex is huge.

Nearly 2,500 'units' of housing are being proposed which makes it vastly different to plans at Brandon (Coventry) for instance where the developer is looking to build about 180 homes.

This means that the scale of the developer contributions at the Arena will be much larger than elsewhere.

A sum of £29m has already been 'budgeted' via a document called a 'Heads of Terms' but, at the moment, nothing is being set aside to protect speedway.

In our view, this is wrong and we are arguing this point vigorously, especially as it contravenes local planning policies.

Further afield, we can point to the situation at Swindon where the local council, with the backing of the local MP, has ruled that the developer must finish developing the Abbey Stadium before more houses can be built.

Public Support

OUR VISION OF a new track has little chance of success without gathering broad support from the wider public.

THL quickly started a campaign of engagement including an e-petition that now has almost 4,000 signatures and nearly 2,000 comments and using Ian's considerable creative expertise, the club already has an active website and active and responsive social media platforms such as Twitter, Facebook, and Instagram.

As importantly, THL has also looked to keep racing to maintain public and supporters' interest and we've succeeded in tracking three representative sides over the past two seasons.

In 2019, the Hammers rode at Kent and Mildenhall in National League standard challenges and in 2020, we accepted an invitation to ride against Crayford in a 'behind closed doors' MSDL standard challenge.

Remarkably, this match also provided us with an opportunity to 'speak to the nation' as Mark's interview with (friend of the Eagles) Ken Burnett from T2TV was broadcast several times on ITV Meridian news.

Regular press releases and articles in the speedway press are also very useful in maintaining a regular flow of information and opinion.

Obviously, with every passing season without speedway, it might be easy for us, and our supporters, to get disheartened but progress is being made.

In sport, it's often the hope that 'kills you' but we are getting enough encouragement to keep on, keeping on.

At a Full Council Cabinet meeting just last month, for instance, we were extremely happy to hear that Portfolio Holder (Councillor) for Regeneration and Strategic Investment make it plain that speedway should play an important part in the borough and that he and his colleagues will expect that any future development of the Arena Essex site takes care of the needs of speedway.



Rafał Włosek



Glory days for the Hammers, winners of the Knockout Cup in 2009.

The John Somerville Collection



Current HG Aerospace Eagles' Richard Lawson wins from Craig Cook in the last race to be held at the Lakeside Arena on 14th September 2018.

Rafał Włosek

Summary

In the meantime, and definitely throughout 2021, THL is delighted to be working with Ian Jordan and everyone at Eastbourne, primarily in support of the MSDL Seagulls.

This partnership provides us with information, connections, and ideas about how to move our own project forward as the promotion at Eastbourne is definitely at the forefront when it comes to communication and community engagement.

This partnership can also only add to our own credibility when it comes to negotiating our future in Essex.

It's relatively simple to make our case for a new track to existing speedway fans but the wider challenge is to persuade people who don't necessarily care for the

sport to care for the solutions we can provide in their community.

Our land use plan, therefore, includes a play area, both sporting and educational facilities, maybe even a creche so that we be of clear benefit to people who live in the area.

We will continue to use the planning process as the basis of our campaign and we will remain opposed to the contents of the LSL planning application until and unless speedway gets the recognition we believe it has earned in Thurrock, specifically, for the last 35 years and, generally, across the UK for close to 100 years.

**CLICK TO
LEARN MORE**



It is important for speedway to shed its Cinderella image and, to be fair, this is definitely happening at national team (Speedway GB) level where a professional image is consistently being presented. We believe that speedway has more going for it, more to lean against, than people realise.

Planning processes are more sophisticated now than they were when Manchester City Council approved, in error, the plans to replace Belle Vue's Hyde Road Stadium with a car auction site and although bad planning decisions, like that one, can still be made, they are less likely to happen if clubs exercise their democratic control and insist that the policies that are in place are actually applied.

Onwards and Upwards!

Mark Sexton

Gelsenkirchen SGP: A near death moment

SGP ERA WORLD championship meetings in Germany have a very chequered history.

I first went to watch a BSI world championship speedway meeting in Germany at the Gelsenkirchen SGP they actually managed to stage indoors by using dry shale (rather than spectacularly having to abandon the meeting at the last minute as they did the next year).

Arriving at the Schalke 04 football club stadium, so many fans were already held outside a very limited number of access gates selected for our collective entry.

Well after the scheduled gate opening time, the crowd surged on to the perimeter fence as we tried to navigate the narrow entrance spaces to the electronic turnstiles, metal detector scanners and bag checks.

Briefly we were in danger of being crushed, injured or possibly killed.

This was entirely a function of the limited ingress points, lack of stewarding outside the rigid perimeter fences and the self-inflicted delay of the late opening that caused excited fans to muster, cluster and then impatiently surge.

As my life nearly flashed before my eyes in a crushing sea of garish anoraks, Poland flag face paints, too loud air horns and wacky headgear, in a moment of sudden clarity I recalled that minutes earlier I had seen Wolverhampton Speedway promoter Chris van Straaten walk towards these very turnstiles.

When they say you have your life flash



Ex-Eastbourne Eagles writer-in-residence and speedway author Jeff Scott tells us about his experiences at German SGPs and how research for his SGP books eventually took him deep into German woods where he found the world championship speedway equivalent of the Duke of Edinburgh Award meets the Teddy Bears' Picnic.



before you, that CVS should star in these recollections isn't quite what I expected.

Of course, whenever you enjoy a near death experience with CVS, you subsequently experience every day you are given thereafter as both a gift and blessing.

Having survived my impending doom, memories of the rest of the night are mostly lost to me.

I can remember that a notable number of Ipswich fans had travelled over on two coaches to enjoy the heady exoticism (compared to Suffolk) and post-industrial delights of Gelsenkirchen – famous for its coal mines – and possibly cast their eyes over future Witch and second reserve Tobi Kroner.

The racing was – as is traditional indoors – bunched, processional and

forgettable. Rather excitingly, Right Said Fred provided the musical entertainment.

It was so freezing inside the stadium that it was difficult for anyone to feel sexy, let alone want to take their shirts off.

Those were the magical early days of SGPs where BSI vaguely tried by paying for past their best 'name' bands to serenade us.

Only a few years later, playing their entire brief set again as an encore at Chris Morton's Silver Wedding Anniversary party was sufficient fame for The Magoos to get booked to headline the Cardiff SGP for a couple of seasons.

Gelsenkirchen 2007 was the last SGP held in Germany for nearly a decade before BSI plumped to stage another in the forested wilds of Mecklenburg-Western Pomerania. Teterow is really two tracks.

One is pressed into action for occasional

speedway meetings and the bigger, more renowned 100 year old Bergring Arena grass track. Basically, the FIM German SGP is yet another World Championship meeting staged in a regional European forest.

The travel information provided for any series event on the SGP website is frankly sketchy and perfunctory at best. Advice is also private transport biased and the few overnight accommodation recommendations that appear on their website invariably require some form of tent or caravanning.

The best hotels in the area – should they even exist – are contractually reserved for BSI executives, FIM officials and their media hangers on.

Of course, the prime European speedway demographic is such that it is almost assumed as a fact of nature that most fans also own camper vans, caravans or, it seems, tents to really test their lumbago.

Faced with all these travel difficulties, sensibly many fans opt for the convenience of an organised tour with other like-minded speedway fan OAPs.

Though it was hard to imagine BSI could ever better the self-inflicted disaster of wetting their own shale, the initial staging of the Teterow event also attracted strong fan criticism for its disorganisation, difficulty of access and, more importantly, the dangerous possibility of again getting crushed to death outside the event.

Of course, rights holders BSI have some previous when it comes to trying to crush speedway fans in Germany by spat-cocking them on the perimeter fencing but few expected that they would wish to repeat it. Though they give nothing away for free unless accidentally, Colin Beveridge and his wife Sandra got first-hand experience of BSI's generous gift of lifelong spiritual re-awakening and a new found appreciation of the simple things in life and the brute fact of our shared mortality (albeit without Chris Van Straaten nearby).

For them, this happened when they went along – with pit passes – to the first



FIM Speedway German SGP at Teterow in 2016 to celebrate an important wedding anniversary.

Though it didn't feature in the subsequent triumphant press reports, Colin still quite can't believe what went on:

"Without exaggerating we were literally minutes away from a major crowd disaster with numerous injuries and, god forbid, fatalities. "Suddenly the Gates were thrown open and everyone streamed in without having their tickets scanned.

"Speaking with [FIM Track Director] Phil Morris later he said this was his decision as he could see the crowd numbers and pressure at the entrance building to dangerous levels."

Colin and his wife weren't the only ones enjoying an unforgettable first Teterow SGP. UK speedway specialist travel agency Travel Plus Tours (TPT) took along around 150 fans to the initial staging.

TPT coaches took supporters to the official car park, deep inside a wooded clearing surrounded by many trees and good-sized fields on the distant edge of an industrial estate on the far perimeter of Teterow.

Fans soon struggled with conditions underfoot. Forest paths were uneven, combined with the treacherous Battle of the Somme mud-bath conditions of the compulsory yomp through surrounding "stubble fields" in order to get to the stadium.

We all know that British speedway attracts an older – sometimes infirm – crowd to worship at its declining roster of speedway shrines nowadays. If getting to the far-flung Bergring Arena in Teterow for the SGP is hard during daylight hours, getting back after dark wearing casual footwear with walking sticks or wheelchairs is, by all accounts, altogether a much more testing SAS-style proposition. Negotiating undulating forest paths and "stubble fields" in the pitch dark after the meeting in search of the safety and warmth of your waiting coach in a distant car park is a difficult kettle of fish that easily defeats even the able-bodied and optimistic.

Fans who get there on organised tours were the lucky ones compared to those expecting return journeys on the shuttle buses that brought them as, sadly, BSI forgot to provide these back to town.

Hardly a surprise given they were also unable to predict the existence of nightfall so, sadly, failed to provide any lighting to help fans negotiate the treacherous forest paths and pot-holed rough-hewn car parks too. According to the TPT office telephonist, the cumulative effect of those difficulties upset attending clients to such an extent some despaired, others cried or felt frightened that night.

Many complained.

Word got about too and demand for further TPT adventures to Teterow disappeared from their SGP schedule. Due to what then TPT owner David Goodchild diplomatically termed as "insufficient demand".

The SGP website often sings the praises and joys of camping at individual world championship speedway events.

Staying in a tent is such a regular option that you half-suspect BSI run some kind of unofficial shadow Duke of Edinburgh award scheme where even attending any SGP wins badges as just getting there requires great ingenuity and resilience on the part of the average speedway fan not travelling on a tour.

The wilful obscurity of so many SGP locations means just finding the track requires high level language, navigation, map reading, computer and compass skills as well as great self-reliance, energy and adaptability.

Given all the feedback and the warnings about conditions and travel complexity, I wonder if this isn't an opportunity for BSI to get back on the front foot when it comes to innovative SGP merchandise?

Though crowds nowadays have badly tailed off, they could produce an exciting line of branded 'I nearly got crushed to death on the fence outside the SGP' Tour T-shirts. The last really exciting piece of SGP branded gear were the thongs – modelled on a regular basis at events by both the World Feed live commentary team and also BSI's Managing Director – replete with tiny official "FIM" logos. And, of course, their Air Freshener (Methanol Fragrance) range.

Given the mandatory jolly-campers venture-scouting meets survivalist ethos that apparently dictates world championship venue choices set in obscure regional forest locations, surely it is time that SGP merchandise included some more practical SGP branded and be-logoed camping and trekking items?

These could include: waterproof trousers (with optional reflective strips); a



SGP torch range; ropes, compass and camouflage make-up; long-johns, gloves, insect repellent, battery-operated hand warmer and fibre-rich energy bars.

Since attending recent SGPs requires significant off-road excursions, most fans will have to travel without the advanced filtration systems preppers usually like on-hand. So wide necked plastic SGP branded flasks for when, like Bear Grylls, we are forced to drink our own urine would make a lovely Christmas present for the keen SGP fan in your life?

Though BSI have conspicuously and spectacularly failed to live up to most of their stated "global" ambitions for the SGP over these past two decades (city centre modern stadia stagings; international TV audiences; big brand sponsors; rider celebrity; good toilets etc), Teterow arguably wins the very strongly contested accolade for the least wheelchair or disability-friendly speedway location ever.

Who could have predicted that – in an intensely competitive field – it is in the area of limiting disabled access that BSI finally live up to their ambition to deliver recognisable excellence on a global speedway stage? The chance to break your ankles or get crushed at the entrance turnstiles must be something of what the Mayor of Teterow Andreas Lange alludes



Winner of the 2016 German Grand Prix Jason Doyle with runner-up Bartosz Zmarzlik and Greg Hancock (third).

to in his column in the official programme as "the joy of speedway".

If judged by his paean to the SGP in Teterow, Mayor Andreas is big on fan emotion and looking on the bright side.

Like BSI, he believes it is all about the shared near death experience. Whether it is the fan feels of breathing your last in a crush on a fence in the middle of nowhere (or edge of an ex-industrial town) beforehand or breaking bones falling over in the struggle to leave after, Andreas informs us speedway – apparently – "evokes emotions and desires in many of us" and can "raise the personal mood" as well as "strengthen the feeling of togetherness".

Jeff Scott's acclaimed books on the SGP – *Hitchhiker's Guide to the Speedway Grand Prix* (2019) and *Who Gates Wins* (2020) – are available at www.methanolpress.com, all good bookshops and Amazon.

Spot the Number Ones; The riders are **A** Adam Shields, **B** Eddie Kennett, **C** Cameron Woodward, **D** Martin Dugard, **E** Matej Zagar, **F** Nicki Pederson, **G** Mark Loram, **H** Dawid Lampart, **I** Bjarne Pedersen, **J** Scott Nicholls, **K** Paul Gachet.

The odd one out is Polish rider, Dawid Lampart who for some reason had the No 1 on his suit at a press and practice day but never rode as an Eagles No 1.



**QUALITY PRINTING
AT COMPETITIVE PRICES**



From Corporate Identity, through Design Concepts to the final printed article.

**NO JOB TOO BIG
or TOO SMALL**

07949 615710 for a price or advice on your next printing job or project

Fineprint (Sussex) Limited, 17 Burgess Road, Hastings, East Sussex TN35 4NR
 Hastings : 01424 427676 ■ Mobile : 07949 615710 ■ Email : les@fineprintsl.co.uk

www.fineprintsl.co.uk



Drew Kemp